

LULU

TRIBUTES





**RACHEL LULU ELIZABETH
RONIKE WRIGHT née COKER**

2nd January 1929 – 9th March 2023



**Chevalier dans l'Ordre des
Palmes Academiques**

Requiescat in Pace



"distinguished Christian lady"

"excellent mentor"

"beautiful and brilliant"

"always a star to your students"

"exceptional role model"

"Soft spoken"

"caring"

"maman"

"grand-mère"

"belle-mère"

"professeur"

"couturière"

"chanteuse"

"tante"

"cuisinière"

"disciplinaire"

*"It is nothing to die.
It is frightful not to live."*

Victor Hugo

Lulu's Life

Rachel Lulu Wright, née Coker

Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques, M. Litt, M.A. (Cantab)

Lulu was born 2.1.29 at 66 Wellington St, Freetown, delivered by Compounder John, who became one of her godfathers. She was christened on Maundy Thursday at St. Philips Church, Patton St., where her father was Curate. She was named Rachel after her mother, Lulu after her maternal grandmother, Elizabeth after her paternal grandmother, Ronike (one Yoruba/Nigerian name, according to Krio tradition).

Her father, Rev Gershom H.S. Coker, was a descendant of the liberated Africans, while her mother, Rachel P. Coker (née Caulker) JP, was of the Sherbro tribe. The Caulkers were the most prominent family in the Kagboro Chiefdom, southern Sierra Leone, originating from an 18th century English trader who married the local chief's daughter, Yacumba.

She had one younger sister, the late Genevieve Yaskey. After their father passed away in May 1934, their mother went back to join the staff of the Annie Walsh Memorial School.

Lulu started school at the Bathurst St. Infant School when she was 4 years old. At 5, she went over to the Annie Walsh Memorial School (AWMS) Kindergarten, going up to Form 5 where she finished at 15.

At 7 years old, when her mother became a boarding mistress, she became a boarder at the AWMS. Holiday visits took her to Conakry, Guinea where her paternal grandparents lived, and to Mambo, Kagboro Chiefdom, where her maternal grandparents lived. Some of her happiest early memories were of travelling by sea to Conakry, and by train, lorry and boat to Mambo. Sometimes the Mambo boat was rowed down river, sometimes it sailed across the Yawri Bay, or was propelled by

an outboard motor engine when Grandpa came to fetch the family himself. Grandpa George Caulker was a very gifted man, well read, innovative, creative. Doing most of the work himself, he built his boat, 'Model', his house and his well with roof and pulley. Self-taught, he worked with manuals and lived by trading in palm kernels, cola nuts, etc. Grandpa Henry Coker was one of the first Africans to be given a managerial position in the CFAO (Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale) and was based in Conakry. This earned him the nickname 'Compagnie Coker', later hyphenated as a surname by some of his descendants.

Life as an AWMS boarder was happy and well-ordered. Rules were strict. There was no talking from waking up until breakfast whilst girls did their chores and took showers. Everybody had to tidy up for dormitory inspections. Boarders' prayers were at 7am. One favourite 'birthday hymn' was:

*"Make what is true more true to me
Let fuller light appear
All that is evil take from me
All that is doubtful, clear."*

Lulu quickly learnt to obey the rules in a rather regimented atmosphere. Both at home and at school, Christian values were paramount.

After school certificate in 1944, she went to England for VIth form at the Bromley County Grammar School for Girls. She lived first with Mrs. Baxter and Miss Glaisby (Mrs. Baxter's sister), and later with Mr. and Mrs. Thorpe, who looked after her until she entered Royal Holloway College (RHC) where she read English, French and Latin for a London General degree. At Royal Holloway, she became part of a 'family', according to the college tradition. They were 7 in number and remained good friends over the years. From RHC she travelled to

France during the summers of 1949 and 1950, and this included working in Marseilles where she did an 'au-pair' job for 6 weeks, and getting to know her penfriend Danielle who became a lifelong friend. After Royal Holloway, she went to the Institute of Education, London University, where she got her PGCE.

Back in Sierra Leone, she joined the staff at her old school, the AWMS, in 1952. Fellow members of staff included Miss Dorothy Pole, her principal throughout her schooldays, and others of her former teachers still on the staff. She taught French primarily, English frequently and other subjects, including Latin when necessary. Her first class was a charming, well-behaved group of girls who were *"a joy to teach"*.

In 1958, she returned to Britain to study at the University of Cambridge – Girton College. There, she was taught by exceptional French scholars like Prof. Alison Fairlie and Mme Odette de Mourgues. She graduated in 1960 with a 2:1 in Modern and Medieval Languages and returned to the AWMS where a 6th form had now been started.

Her mother was the key person in her life. Ambitious, resolute and unflinching in her desire to see Lulu do well, though widowed early, she did not allow modest means to deter her. When Lulu left Sierra Leone in 1945, her mother's last words were: *"You must try to get a degree before you return home"*, when there were only 3 female Sierra Leonean graduates apart from 2 lawyers and a doctor. She continued to be a major influence on Lulu until her death in 1972. *"At home my mother was unsparing with slaps, especially to check insolence and laziness. But her discipline was more by example and precept."* Lulu learnt thrift from her, along with self-respect and contentment with what she could afford, so that other children's advantages

held little attraction. *"My sister and I learnt to clean and sew and cook. As there were still laundresses in the hillside villages, who went up and down with our clothes for a few shillings, we did not wash our own clothes".*

Lulu always wanted to be a teacher, inspired by her mother and father, both teachers. As a schoolgirl, she found work challenging and satisfying, pleasing her teachers, most of whom she admired, owing them all a huge debt of gratitude. *"Miss Pole gave me a sense of the dignity of the profession. Miss Honora Johnston (later Benjamin) the habit of attention to detail, Miss Enid Smart impressed me with her command of her subject and momentous enthusiasm for it, Mrs Hyde-Forster for creating the yardstick of a university degree attainable by women, and Mrs. Olive Conton and 6th form teachers in England a love of French."*

In 1962, she married Logie E. Wright, then a lecturer at the Teacher Training College, Tower Hill and Director of the Freetown Choral Group and the Cecilians.

Also in 1962, she was appointed Vice-Principal of the AWMS, with Mrs Lati Hyde-Forster as Principal. In 1964, she left the AWMS to become head of the French Dept. at Milton Margai Teachers' College. Lulu described herself as *"a teacher all my life"* – a secondary school senior teacher and vice-principal, senior lecturer, and then head of the University of Sierra Leone's Dept. of Modern Languages for 8 years (as well as lecturing in the Dept. of Education for 3 years).

In addition to her teaching duties at the university, she maintained relations with the French Embassy and the Ministry of Education over scholarships and bursaries, etc. She looked after the welfare of the students, so that they could perform well in the desperate economic situation of the 80s and 90s. The warmth and co-operation of generally eager students was what kept her going, and she was particularly inspired

by classes with bright students *"some of whom were intellectually more acute than I".*

Teaching for the best part of 42 years, she was also a Chief Examiner for the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) O level examinations for a while, and from 1960 – 66, presented radio school broadcasts of French lessons. When not teaching, she volunteered for the YWCA, sang regularly (solos and in choirs), travelled internationally as an interpreter, and on retirement, became a member of the Monuments and Relics Commission. In addition, she was the first Chair of the Board at the Ballanta Academy of Music – a position she held for 10 years.

As a member of the YWCA, she served in various capacities, including chairing various committees, being a member of the National Council, and most importantly, serving for 8 years as one of three African members of the World Executive Committee.

Her writing included articles for academic journals, a French Language Reader of Sierra Leonean folk tales for secondary schools, articles for publication in local newspapers on current affairs, and protest letters.

Teaching was always a joy for Lulu, who found she was able to relate to her students, while their attitude towards her was a constant inspiration. Many became personal friends or emerged unexpectedly to cheer her with compliments and fond memories. High points of her teaching career happened in 1989 and 1991. Two of her students gained 1st class degrees. The external examiner, a professor from Leeds said, *"This man would have got a 1st class degree anywhere."* She wrote, *"The fact that some of us were able to reach and maintain international standards in the educational and financial desert of Sierra Leone is both our blessing and our triumph."* Another triumph was knowing that nearly every French teacher in the country passed through her

hands at some stage – *"a perpetual source of satisfaction to me."*

Equally important was being able to save enough to send her children to England for further study, and, having her first child at 38, *"gave me more joy than anything, before or since."* Lulu and Logie had 2 children, Tunde (Lynette) and Dennis. She was happiest when her family was together at home, when helping people to be the best that they could be, and when holding out for what was right even when others were falling for easier options. When assailed by feelings of failure, this was usually only temporary. As she was *"an optimist by nature"*, she usually came round to finding some value in her effort.

"Since life is a constant process of choices, I would not have had mine otherwise."

Lulu never tired of giving of her time, her resources and her counsel to those who came to her for support over the years. She loved, laboured and fought fiercely for the people and the causes that were important to her. She was adamant about staying in Sierra Leone, despite the acute downturn of the environment of Freetown and the decline in standards across the board. For her it was home and where she wanted to end her days. Many a warning was given to her children *"I don't want to die in England"*. In 2019, the year she turned 90, she made her last annual solo trip to the U.K. to visit her grandchildren. The ensuing COVID pandemic curtailed not only her international travel but also much of her regular local activity, thereby allowing in the vagaries of frailty and old age.

Lulu died on 9th March 2023 and is survived by two children Tunde (Lynette) and Dennis, her son-in-law Nick and four grandchildren Johari (25), Ato (23), Safia (20) and Zuben (18). She was laid to rest next to her beloved Logie at Kingtom Cemetery on 4th April.

Lynette & Dennis

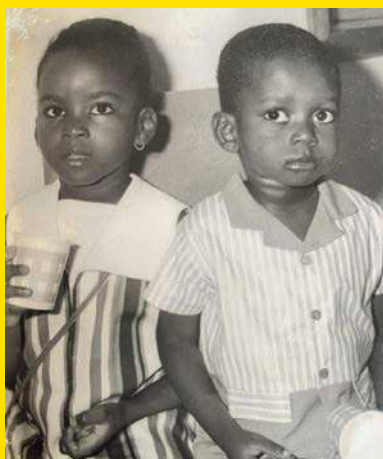
Mummy! Mummy! Lu!

I couldn't be prouder or more inspired than I have been of you and by you all my life.

Thank you for everything (including the tellings-off which continued until 8 weeks ago and by which I was suitably chastened on every occasion!!).

You were the embodiment of the expression "one in a million". I will always be extremely proud to be able to say you were my mum, especially with the trail blazing you achieved for over four score years and ten. From introducing the idea of the Orange Belt Award to your alma mater, the Annie Walsh Memorial School, when you returned from your initial UK studies to teach there, to setting up the Sierra Leone French Teachers Association and being the first African and first female head of the Modern Languages Department at the University of Sierra Leone; from being, with Aunty Olu Abisogun, one of the first 2 Africans to matriculate into Girton College Cambridge, to chairing the Board of the Ballanta Academy of Music in its first 10 years. The list goes on.

I can only try and emulate; to do my best to follow in your dynamic footsteps. I don't quite measure up in terms of the breadth of skills (particularly sewing and other such handiwork), but I hope that when I try, for example, to take a stand about something, it is because I have yours and Daddy's examples throughout my childhood, of standing up for what you felt was right. I thank you for making sure that, when I left Sierra Leone aged 16, I had not just been surrounded with books and academic pursuits but could also cook, sort of sew, arrange flowers and a host of other things. You made sure that our lives were full of rich experiences not only through your own direct teaching and efforts, but also through the people you brought into our lives



– family, old university friends, colleagues etc.

Every summer when you were in Birmingham with us I would watch you, in absolute awe of your physical and emotional strength, your wisdom, your stoicism and your serenity. Your guarded (but not always timely) counsel was also always noted and (mostly) appreciated by us all (ha ha). I forgive you for always taking your son-in-law's side in any dispute. I remember you telling me how in any low moments in Freetown, perhaps sitting in the darkness of a power cut, you'd cheer yourself up with flashbacks of 'how Nick is

with the children'. We have missed your presence in our home over the past 3 summers and can't believe we shall never share such moments again.

Over the years, you told me in no uncertain terms when I let you down and you told me without hesitation when I made you proud. I appreciate having grown up in a home where disagreements and conflict were balanced with musicmaking and laughter. I thank you for all the love and lessons and I have no idea how Dennis and I are going to do without you.

May God hold you safely with Daddy, Aunty Gen and everyone else you've gone to join. I believe it's going to be all about the music huh? Daddy's been waiting nearly 23 years to sing with you again.

Until we meet again, maman

Yours always,

Tun-Tuns X

Thanks to God for Mummy and the person she was all her life; Patient, forbearing, strong, prayerful, amusing, witty, educated, masterful, loving, full of song, enlightening, warm, persevering, selfless, encouraging; & all the things that a good wife, mother and grandmother are!

Coker, Caulker and Wright, ever true!

Mummy may God bless you into eternity, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Love,

Dennis x

Nick & Jean



I have been privileged to have such a caring, esteemed and forthright mother-in-law for over 25 years. She has been the backbone of her family, supporting and guiding her children in adulthood with a keen awareness of the right thing to do (...well most of the time!).

I recall us preparing a video Christmas message a few years ago, as she was returning to Freetown prior to Christmas, and we thought it might be fun to have her 'presence' on Christmas day as a surprise for Lynette and the grandchildren. As ever she approached the task with seriousness and a level of professionalism that left Queen Elizabeth II's annual Christmas message firmly in her wake.

She always enjoyed being with and looking after her grandchildren on her extended visits to the UK. She was always up for a challenge and worked with even the youngest of them to get on board with smartphone technology in recent years. I recall her first few weeks with a touchscreen phone when one cheeky grandchild advised her that "touch screens are for touching not pushing like buttons Grandma!"

It is well known that Lulu was normally soft spoken but still formidably clear and direct in character. She had firmly held views on life and its intricacies. I often had extended discussions with her about attitudes and politics, and I know she simply endured me trying to explain certain 'modern' perspectives whilst politely disagreeing or questioning. You really knew you'd overstepped her patience when she only acknowledged your utterings with a "hmmm" or a long "well I'm sure you have your opinion, however...". We certainly had some fun and enlightening discussions, supported by her wealth of experiences.

We have had a long-running joke about Lulu's imperative not to cause disappointment or offence by ever rejecting the offer of an alcoholic beverage! On this occasion I raise my glass wholeheartedly to the memory of Lulu for being an understanding and supportive mother-in-law.

Nick x

Dearest Lulu,

What a pleasure it was meeting and getting to know you!

Your warmth and kindness, your willingness to help in any situation if you could.

May your soul rest in peace and rise in glory.

Jean x

Johari & Ato

Dear Grandma

Like most photos, each photo of us together reminds me of a special time and place. Although all of those memories are precious, as years have passed and I have learned more about you and about your life, I have come to appreciate how each of those moments fit into your life.

There is a photograph of us from 1998, taken in the departure lounge at Heathrow Airport. I was a bit too young to hold onto any specific memories of that day, but the picture still reminds me of the excitement I felt every time you arrived in England, and the emotional goodbye we would say when it was time for you to leave. Having chatted to you about your visits in later years, and having made the trip from Birmingham to Lightfoot-Boston Road and back as an adult, I look at the same photograph and I see what each visit meant to you.

The photo we took on the day of my graduation (of you, Gran and me) is one of my favourites. I was so grateful that you were both able to come and celebrate with me. I remember feeling a little overwhelmed when I saw the two of you sitting in the front row. I think all of the family history that had led us to that moment led to a bit of a melodramatic climax in my head, but I think you felt it too.

As we celebrate your extraordinary life, I am thankful for your eloquence and your willingness to share your experiences with us. I look forward to hearing and reading more incredible stories from friends and relatives in the coming months.

All my love

Johari



Ato: Aeroplane! ...

Mummy: Going on??...

Ato: Holiday ...

Mummy: To see??

Ato: Grandmaaa!!!!



Safia & Zuben

Dear Grandma,

I want to first start by saying, I love you. Secondly, I would like to say that I am sorry. I wish I had the chance to say goodbye properly, to have one last conversation with you and hear your voice - a sound that will forever stay with me.

We as a family are so grateful that God blessed us with you; an outstanding role model with one of the kindest souls I have ever encountered. The amount you achieved in your lifetime is breath-taking and truly inspiring. The way you strode through life and its challenges with such grace and humility, and then created a beautiful family with Grandpa which led you to us; the strength you carried was unlike anything I have ever seen.

As your second granddaughter, I have loved knowing how much you always cared for us and feeling as though you were here with me even though you were thousands of miles away. My fondest memories of you go back to when you first taught me how to sew. You were so delicate and patient with me, and made sure that I knew I could learn how to do it just as well as you. You even always taught me to wear a thimble so I didn't prick myself. I still carry that skill and have never forgotten the lessons. Every day spent with you was a lesson -



filled with wisdom, light, love and encouragement.

I wish I had more days with you, but you're with the angels now where you can be with Grandpa again, sharing your love with him once more. It brings me great comfort knowing that you are now at peace and resting safely.

I finally wanted to thank you for bringing my mother into this world, for all that you did to protect her and the endless amounts of love, care and memories you gave her. She has carried this with her throughout her life and it has shaped her into the most beautiful, remarkable and special person that I get to call mum. She is a testament to everything that you were and the legacy that you leave.

It is truly heart-breaking that I will never be able to see you again, to hug you or kiss your cheek. but I am forever grateful that you were and always will be my Grandma Lu. I love you Grandma Lu; until we meet again.

Your granddaughter,

Safia



Dear Grandma,

Grandma you were such an extraordinary person. For as long as I can remember you've been old but somehow always active, and always eager to share many years' worth of wisdom and knowledge. I'll forever be grateful to you for looking after me at a time when I couldn't look after myself for 10 months following major surgery. I can only imagine how you overextended yourself to attend to my needs.

I will always remember how excited we would get when we heard that you were coming to stay in the UK, and how you would patiently entertain my enthusiastic explanations of the continuity of the Marvel movies. I would always enjoy cooking with you, whether I was helping you make banana bread for the family or you were helping me to cook my lunch when I wasn't well. One of my clear memories of a recent visit was the time you came to find me in my room to tell me excitedly that Johari had achieved a first in her degree.

Even when you couldn't be with us physically, you would always check up on us, especially during lockdown, or during my GCSEs when you would help me practise my French speaking over video call. I would always look forward to your calls on my birthday, so we could have long conversations about school and politics.

Miss you already Grandma. Rest in power.

Love from Zuben x

Gavin & Rosemary



It is hard to grasp that it is nearly 65 years since Lulu and I were new students at Girton College, Cambridge. I think she was the first African woman I had met and looking back to that time, there was not a shred of strangeness because of the graciousness with which she tolerated the immaturity of a group of raw English schoolgirls who had seen little of the world. We only realised gradually that Lulu had been through all this some ten years previously and that she had joined us as a graduate of Royal Holloway, London University, with life and teaching experience already behind her, albeit in the traditionally English-style education in Freetown. That was still a time of colonialism, of which we had little understanding. The winds of change were just stirring but we did not foresee the implications of citizenship, visas, bureaucracy and the hostile environment.



Whether it was in grappling with French prose or subtle French poetry, or sharing passionate choral singing, or learning to ride a bicycle, or coping with the icy winds of the Huntingdon Road there was no apparent cultural divide. Only, many years later, when we stayed with her in Freetown did we appreciate what she - and later Tunde - had been trying to explain to us of Sierra Leone's rich culture and history and the struggle for daily life in a country impoverished by the devastation of civil war and all the earlier disappointments of the early independent governments. We were so privileged to visit her friends and relatives and to learn of the deep and wide networks of Sierra Leonean society - there and in the wider world.



Knowing Lulu and keeping in touch with her over the long years has been such an enriching experience for us - and we were so thankful that she entrusted Tunde to our family from her first days in England. We just love the way in which we have been enfolded into all generations of the Wright and Adjei families and we share with you all our deep love for Lulu and all she did in her long and full life.

With all our love

Gavin & Rosemary

18 March 2023

Lucilda

My very dear Cousin Lulu,

I hope I am not repeating what I wrote on your 80th birthday, but I have to tell you once again how much I have admired you since the day you returned from England in the early 1950s. I was awed by the perfect fit of your pale blue, or was it pale green? dress, and even more so by your beautiful accent when you spoke. Up till then, I had only ever heard what used to be called 'The Queen's English' on the BBC. Later, I would find your singing voice even more awe-inspiring. Thank you once again for honouring Kobi and me with a solo at our wedding, fifty years ago last February. Your rendition

of 'O, Perfect Love' has remained one of the most precious memories of that momentous day. Another unfading memory goes back to 1983. I was on a three-month contract in Geneva when you came to attend a meeting at the headquarters of the World YWCA. You brought me some delicious bitas and fufu that made such a welcome change after weeks of eating European food. Once again, thank you. It was much appreciated as were your letters to me which had started during my time at university in England in the 1960s.

Letters from home were cherished in those days especially since most Sierra Leoneans who

went abroad for further studies did not set eyes on family and friends left behind till they had completed their courses. Your letters were not only welcome but always very satisfying - full of interesting news and views. Not that I would have appreciated them any less, but it wasn't till years later that I discovered that you actually enjoyed writing. Your forthright and thought-provoking articles in AWOKO caused Tunde quite a bit of anxiety, but they were always a great pleasure to read.

Notice that I haven't written about having you as my French teacher at the Annie Walsh. That is because I am sure other people will talk about that experience. Before I end, let me mention something else about you that leaves me awe-struck. It is your strength of mind and body. With it you have coped with all the challenges of life in Freetown, as well as, in the last couple of years, having to attend tedious court sessions relating to a family matter. Your stamina has also kept you travelling to, from, and within the UK till this great age. It really struck me when we met in London last summer. There I was, fifteen years younger than you, yet wiped out after speaking at the Krio Descendants reunion and going to the luncheon sale, whereas you were quite game for attending the annual ball and banquet that night. You are truly amazing.

Kobi joins me in congratulating you on reaching the great age of ninety. We pray that, for our benefit as well, you will continue to enjoy strength of mind and body for many more years, and the peace you deserve.

HAPPY, HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

GOD BLESS YOU!

Lucilda x

Lucilda Hunter (deceased)



Alama & Gerard

Ninety today !!!

To God be the glory - What a big blessing! Congratulations!

Cousin Lulu you are 90 years "young" today .Like 'Johnny Walker' you are still going strong; so alert, still very active young at heart very interested in people places and everything.

Cousin Lulu, you are fun to be with and highly respected by all of us.

My special thanks to you for the part you have played in my life and which you still play.May God bless you. I wish you peace.The kind of peace that only God can give, a deep heartfelt serenity for everyday, along with every confidence that God will handle things

Happy birthday, Love you !

Alama

Elisabeth Alama Taylor (deceased)

**Ah yes, a paeen penned for
Cuz Lu...**

Lulu
Long before we two knew
What cousins were,
Lulu and Gen, aye those two,
We held dear.

When first we were held
Against the North East chill,
Into Christendom entered
By GodMother Lulu's goodwill.

When weaned by Wellington's well,
We watched the Bondo devil's spell,
African Chameleon, Locus fruit and Bat
Lulu redoubtable, amidst all that.

Cousin Lulu, forever true,
The twin house of Sabo,
Sao and Sina salute you,
Singing Ekabor, Ekabor, Ekabor.

Happy Birthday,
At three score and thirty,
Happy returns,
may you have more than plenty.

Gerard Caulker



88th birthday with Dennis, Coker cousin Alama, Caulker cousins Lucilda and Ginnie, Wright niece Gladys



Christening of Glenn & Gerard Caulker, Gateshead 1960

Imodale & Velma



Dear Cousin Lulu, you have left me with many great memories. You told me you went to see me at PCMH when I was born, and you have been in my life since then. While I may not remember your coming to take me out when I was a little girl you reminded me on my 80th birthday that I once asked you to carry me because I was tired of walking.

Yes, you were my big cousin who frequently sent me gifts when you were in college in England. When you returned home you were my French Teacher, and you ran the French club. You gave each one of us a French name. Mine was my middle name Olivette. You also had a beautiful contralto voice and many who built new homes called on you to sing "Bless this house" at the dedications. I am sure your voice was one of the attractions for your beloved husband Logie. I often wished I could sing like you. You were close to your uncle Richard, so you visited us at the Albert Academy often.

Over the years you visited me in the United States, and you were there to entertain me whenever I came home. You made sure I went to the beach, whether Lumley or Goderich or even Kent. You also made sure you were available to take me to Wellington to see Auntie Amelia, driving up the awful unpaved road to her house. When I wrote my book on "The Caulkers of Sierra Leone" you drove me to Fourah Bay college and made sure the book was reviewed by Professor Joe Allie. You even guided me to the Archives to do some research.

Then with all the children of George and Regina Caulker of Mambo gone, you took on the mantle of family head. You took on issues concerning the family home on Wellington Street. You took an interest in all your young cousins and their families. You have supported and guided me in my development work at Mambo even accompanying me to the Village for the opening of our first project.

Dear cousin Lulu, I could always count on you to be there when I needed you. On every trip I have made home, you were there to entertain me with your delicious food cooked just the way Auntie Rachel did it. I could not have asked for a better big cousin. I will miss our many phone chats and the family stories you often told me.

You have touched many lives and have left a large footprint. You will be sorely missed.

Rest well dear cousin.

Imodale
Imodale Caulker-Burnett

Cousin Lulu, not so long before your 90th birthday in 2019, you appeared out of the blue in my dreams. That had never happened before.

The next day, following a special prayer on your behalf in my morning devotions, I was pleasantly surprised to receive, again out of the blue, a message from Tunde on Messenger informing extended family/friends of the upcoming milestone birthday. As far as I was concerned, the timing could not possibly have been better, given the surprising dream I'd had just the night before. I responded to Tunde immediately, telling her about the dream, along with a promise to honor her request in some way.

My memories of you over the years have been nothing but positive. Even going all the way back to my first childhood awareness of you, I don't ever recall anything unpleasant. Such memories include the following: spending days and nights as a child at beloved Sackville Street where you were often present (one evening with crayon and paper, I tried to copy your movements as you marked Annie Walsh papers with a red pen); you giving my little body a bath, followed by drying me with a towel, then rubbing me down with sweet smelling talcum powder; you staying with us at Eastbury Court, Kensington High Street, London for part of the summer of 1960; you introducing me to my very first French lesson when a friend of yours arrived from France with his daughter (I'm not sure but think he may have been a former French teacher at the Annie Walsh whose daughter could not speak English, and I could not speak French, so we were forced to communicate using isolated words here and there from both languages); you attending an end of year prize-giving at my elementary school in London while my parents were away; your comforting presence at the Annie Walsh papers in 1963 when my reluctant 13 year old self returned to Freetown from the US to attend the school; you coming over to "Shangrila" one night to tell us, with transparent delight, that you were expecting Tunde; and last but by no means least, you going out of your way to visit Ron and me at Shangrila when we made a brief stop there in 2005 from Ghana.

I will always remember and honor you with the best of my love.

Your cousin, Velma

Velma Mitchell

Odette



Dear Lulu,

I say farewell to my dear cousin Lulu Rachel Wright (nee Coker).

Many decades have passed through our lives, some we are able to recall with ease, others of recent past don't come so easily. But those I remember and always recall fondly and with smiles are the earlier days in our lives.

For instance, I remember the part we played at aunty Henny's funeral initiated by our great uncle W C Coker of 2 Pademba Road. I recall when as children, Gen, myself and others of similar age were busy at "play cook" or "play school" or playing akra under the large breadfruit tree in the grounds of Wellington Street – the Caulker's family house, Lulu the brainy one was attentively reading or doing her homework.

We were the younger ones in awe of her being so studious. Looking back, it's amazing the difference of just over 3 years in age could make.

There are also two incidents that remain etched in my memory of you my dear cousin:

1. As children, I recall Aunty Rachel telling us how at one Easter Sunday Service, while the song "The Strife is O'er" was sung; at the refrain "alleluia", Lulu at the top of her voice called – "Mama, Mama den da sing me name" – Baby Lu yah – whenever, I think on this childish interpretation, I beam with cheerful smiles.

2. In 1949 or so, we went to the Cinema in Hexham, Northumberland; and were too early for the show, so we bought fish and chips and sat at the steps

of the Cathedral to eat them, we had such a fun relaxed time, then I realised that Lulu the intellect was just like all of us.

I say fare thee well my dear cousin, your strife is o'er, your battle is done – Alleluia to you Baby Lu yah; as you take your final curtain call on earth for eternal peace with your beloved Logie, father Gershom, mother Rachel and sister Genevieve. We say sleep on and take your rest thou good and faithful servant, while we here on earth cherish fond memories of yester years knowing you.

Rest in perfect peace.

Odette

Odette Coker

Florence



“Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord...”

De Profundis, Psalm 130 v 1

Dearest Lulu,

My best and longest friend!

I am writing from the depths of despair and confusion. We never thought our friendship of 77 years would be disrupted by brutal ill-health, ending in death. God’s ways are past our understanding. We pray for His peace for you and comfort for those of us left behind.

Our friendship began in late Bishop Daly’s home in Weybridge (Surrey, England) during school holidays in the Summer of 1946. You were at a day school in Bromley, Kent. I was at a boarding school in Darley Dale, Derbyshire. How I looked forward to those weeks in the summer when you would come to stay, and my guardian, Ms Daly, would pack picnic lunches for us and send us off to explore the English countryside. What a relief it was to see someone who looked like me, as in those days — the 1940s and 1950s — we saw no black school girls in England.

Our vision was to become graduate teachers and for each of us to return home and teach at our alma mater: you to the Annie Walsh in Freetown and me to the Methodist Girls High School in Bathurst (now Banjul).

We both went on to pursue studies at London University — though in different colleges. How we flourished in those oases of learning, using every opportunity to grow intellectually and socially. We met at conferences for students — not only in Britain, but on the European continent. Alas, that was a time when as students we could not return home until we had completed our studies.

I admire you for returning to England to the prestigious Cambridge University to pursue an honors degree in French at Girton College. Your pursuit of academic excellence did not end there since you had now gone from teaching at school to lecturing at university. Lulu, I don’t know how you taught and pursued research in French literature, while raising a family and pursuing your interest in music (your husband Logie, being a professional musician).

Lulu, your mission has been accomplished. You have impacted the lives of so many young people, encouraging their creativity (whether through music or through some other artistic endeavour), developing their intellectual capacity through studies in French, and building up their moral courage and spiritual strength.

Sierra Leone and indeed, Africa has not yet learned to honor and cherish their women of substance.

AWOGA has lost one of its pioneers. And I have lost a pearl of great value, my dear friend, Lulu.

Rest in peace

Till we meet again

Florence

Dr. Florence Mahoney.



Lulu with godson Sola Mahoney

Gracie



A tribute by Mrs. Gracie Williams

I first came to know Mrs. Wright or “Miss Lulu” as I fondly called her, way back in 1953 when she returned to Sierra Leone from the United Kingdom where she had spent 8 years pursuing educational studies up to the level of B.A. degree in French and English. There was so much about her that I admired. She appeared to be a cut above all the other African teachers at the Annie Walsh Memorial School. She was brisk, strict, well spoken, smartly dressed and amply endowed with musical talents. She played the piano beautifully and sang angelically! I soon considered Miss Lulu my favourite teacher. She was simply inspirational! I was so impressed by her that when I was in the UK, I opted to pursue an honours degree in French, her main subject, rather than English Language and Literature even though I had better marks in the latter.

Miss Lulu’s commitment to non-professional organisations impressed me greatly. The YWCA was dear to her heart and so were The Freetown Choral Society, The Cecilians and The Music Makers. When the Ballanta Academy was established in 1995, by her husband Mr. Logie Wright and Dr Kitty Fadlu-Deen, she became deeply involved in it, serving as the Chair of the Board for the first 10 years of its existence.

Overall, what I admired most was her foray into constructive critical writing for newspapers. She was no laid-back citizen. She fearlessly challenged questionable occurrences in Society and even proffered solutions. What a well-rounded personality! What a perfect role model! If every pupil had a teacher like Mrs. Lulu Wright, the Sierra



Leonean educational landscape would indeed be very bright, and every facet of the country’s life would be vastly improved!

I am glad that my admiration for Miss Lulu turned out to be mutual. She asked me to be a Godmother of her first child and I was only too happy to reciprocate when mine came along. I am happy that both of us had a special relationship with our respective Godchild over the years.

Miss Lulu, thank you for your friendship over the years. I will truly miss you!

Rest in perfect peace.

Au revoir et à la prochaine.

Gracie

Mrs. Gracie Williams



Edith



The news of Aunt Lulu's death came as a shock, at a time when we were anticipating her discharge from hospital.

I first knew her as Miss Lulu Coker at the AWMS, when she was my French teacher. She won the admiration of her pupils including me, little knowing that she would become my favourite sister-in-law, when she got married to my late brother, Logie Wright.

Amazingly years later, she was also the French lecturer for my daughter at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone.

Aunt Lulu was a reputable educator, a lover of music and a brilliant singer, for which she was greatly respected and admired.

She was very much loved by all in the family. Aunt Lulu, as she

was very fondly known, was soft spoken, unassuming, pleasant, very supportive and always ready to play key roles whenever duty called.

I will miss our long conversations and her wise counselling. Her demise has created a vacuum in the family that will never be filled.

She ran her race well, fought the good fight, finished her course on earth, and now with her maker she is at peace.

Your memory will always linger in our hearts.

Edith

Edith Williams

Glenna



My beautiful, graceful, elegant, poised Cousin Lulu, we all knew the day would come (as it must for all of us, eventually) when we would have to say goodbye to you. That has not made your leaving us any easier. You brought a quiet dignity to everything you did and I am grateful and proud to have had you in my bloodline. You certainly brought great honour to being the first grandchild of George (Ba Charch) and Lulu (Yeamié Lolo) Caulker, of Mambo, Kagboro Chieftdom. All your cousins have lived in awe and admiration of the grace you brought to this role. As a testament to how seriously you took this role, I recall the very touching message you sent to us when we lost another cousin last year, Thank you for always being so thoughtful. From the moment you bought me my first Beatrix Potter Books, you engendered a deep love of reading in me as I got drawn into the magical world of Bra Rabbit and Jemima Puddleduck. You will be happy to know that through your inspiration, I bought a boxed set of Beatrix Potter books and movies for my own little girl so that she too could experience the

magic I felt from reading these books. I have not been able to bring myself to part with these even though she is now an adult.

You lived a long, fruitful life, punctuated, of course, by times of sadness. One has to admire how even into your 90s, you continued to run your household well. You did it so effortlessly and with much strength and determination. I will miss you for all these things and more, including our

long and always exhilarating phone chats. Our last one was in the late summer of 2022. That conversation remains vivid and indelibly etched in my memory.

God bless you and grant you eternal rest and peace, Cousin Lulu. You are so loved and will be missed, sorely.

Glenna

Glenna Quinn



Vicky, Frederica, Onike



L - Learn to trust God's mercy power and justice.

U - Understand divine Providence.

L - Liberate one from a confining situation.

U - Understanding empathy.

Frederica Williams October 2018

To my Aunty Lulu,

Over recent years, I have not kept in touch with you, and that is my one regret. However, I'm so incredibly privileged to have spent some of your final days with you, particularly your 94th and final birthday when we spent a lovely evening together. I am so grateful to you for embracing me during those times, as if time had not passed between us. Thank you for being the best mum to Tunde, Dennis and Nick, and wonderful grandmother to Johari, Ato, Safia and Zuben. I pray that the Good Lord guides and protects them, and the rest of the family, and that the peace that passes all understanding sees them through the difficult days to come. You have lead a long and honorable life here on mortal earth; no one can argue with that. May you now continue to blossom in God's eternal Kingdom.

We shall miss you.

Rest in Peace, Aunty Lulu.

Onike

Onike Frazer



Thank you so much for your love, your unflinching support over the years and most of all, for always being there for us. We will surely miss you. Sleep on and take your rest.

Ken & Vicky Turner & family.



Winston Coolie

On behalf of our nuclear Forde family, and Aunt Martha in particular, all of whom have passed on, I offer Lynette, Dennis, and the whole family our heartfelt sympathy at this sad time. I am joined by Gloria and our own family to extend our special Condolences!

Coz Lulu, our lives span from the time in the nineteen fifties when I would visit Aunty Rachel at Sackville Street, through the days of my youth in Freetown. I got to know you and we shared several memorable if enjoyable times singing with the Freetown Choral Group. I left home in 1959 but I would always contact you during my several Home-visits and still treasure a photograph we once took standing outside our beloved St George's Cathedral where I was a chorister for many years. You were blessed with a long and fulfilling life, and during your recent annual visits to the UK, you always contacted me and we were able to meet either at home or with the Adjeis. Gloria and I treasure those precious moments spent together, and now we must say goodbye.

May your Soul rest in Perfect Peace.

Coolie Forde





Rachel with Lulu and Gen



Lulu's confirmation, Bromley



*Lulu with her guardians,
the Thorpe family, Bromley*



Lulu at Sackville Street, Freetown



Lulu the student



Lulu on 88th birthday



With Johari and Tunde, Tokeh Beach June 2021



Johari's baptism (both grandmas) Shrewsbury 1998 with Jean Adjei



Cutting 90th birthday cake with Lucilda, Sussex SL



Dennis and Lulu



AWMS Old Girl (Thanksgiving 2019)



Rev. Gershom Compagnie-Coker



Rachel P Coker JP



Lulu and Gen



Lulu wed Logie 23rd April 1962 at St Thomas Church, Hastings, Sie



Lulu, Logie, Lynette Tunde & Dennis - 1973 Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne



Lynette Tunde & husband Nicholas (Nick) Adjei



Johari, Ato, Safia and Zuben Adjei



Lulu and Gracie with the McQuades



Mothering Sunday 2021



Lulu, Gen and Logie, Law Courts Freetown



Freetown Choral Society with Olivette Caulker, Cathy Maurice-Jones and Gen Yaskey



Lulu and Gen



Aureola and Richard Enwezor's wedding off to sing 'Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring' solo



Lulu and Johari, Takeh June 2021

Europa



It is with deep sorrow in my heart, but gratitude to God for a life well lived, that I write this tribute to celebrate the life of my dear friend Lulu Wright née Coker. Lulu was part of the gang of 8, "Les huit heureuses" translated the "the happy eight" Class of 1944. It was the largest class at the AWMS to take the Senior Cambridge exams. in the history of the Annie Walsh School at the time. We truly were a happy bunch with a special bond between Lulu

and myself, as we shared a desk together. It has been 8 decades since we first met at school, but our friendship has endured the test of time and distance. The last time we were together was at my late sister's 100th. birthday in London where the remaining 3 from our class (Lulu, Naomi, and myself) had the opportunity to spend time together catching up on our families, grand and great grandchildren, and reminiscing of the good old days.

Adieu my dearest friend! You have gone on before us, but we shall meet again in Glory!

To the family of Lulu Wright please accept my deepest condolences.

Europa

Europa Wilson-Agwu



Les huit heureuses - Class of 1944

Miriam

Lulu was one of the loveliest people I know. We enjoyed a wonderful friendship since we both matriculated at Girton in 1958. She came there to do a second degree in French, I to do my first, so we were a year apart, though sharing some of our courses.

We loved her for her sense of humour, her smile, her laughter and admired her for her superb command of English, everything beautifully articulated. In time, we discovered she was 10 years older than we were but she never revealed that, instead treating us as equals. In fact, she must have found us rather naïve and immature.

In college I remember how she cooked special Sierra Leonean dishes for us to sample. We found them extremely HOT on the taste buds! Another vivid memory is of teaching her to ride a bike – see the photo with me running alongside.

In the two years she was studying she was very excited about Sierra Leone's approach to Independence. I well remember how she looked forward to it and later how disillusioned she became with the new governments and rampant corruption.

I was impressed by her deep Christian faith. Obviously it meant a great deal to her. Later she put it into practice in her service to women through the YWCA in Free town and on the World Executive. Of course, she loved music, especially singing, and was instrumental in the founding of the Ballanta Academy of Music, enjoying its achievements, telling me enthusiastically all about it.

She kept a regular correspondence with me, imparting many interesting pieces of news. So, although she was far away, I felt we were still in touch. However, she returned to the UK



fairly often too, visiting friends and staying with her uncle in Gateshead, from where she would cross to Newcastle to see me. We had many happy times together then, meeting in town or having a meal at our house. She with two of her friends even spent one Boxing Day with us at home.

Later, as Tunde's family grew up and she came to visit them it was always lovely to hear a familiar but unexpected voice on the phone and to be able to be in contact that way.

"Hello, it's Lulu" she would say.

"Oh Lulu!" I would exclaim, "where are you?" and so a welcome conversation would follow.

I rarely saw her on these later visits except when we met each other at Girton reunions in 2008 and 2018. Then it was such a joy to be able to speak to one another in person.

I am truly thankful for our long-lived friendship.

Miriam (Rose)



Cambridge graduation with Uncle Richard and Auntie Olivette Caulker

Dafni & Tani



ɔl mi skul met den en mi
wi ɔl bin admaya Koki
nɔto buk nɔmɔ i tich wi
i lan wi fɔ si
se yu nɔ fɔ fɔget
yu self rɛspekt

aw i dres, aw i tɔk, aw i waka
ɔl bin gud fɔ falamakata
na in ep fɔ mek wi
udat wi bi.

Mis Koka gi mi mɔ
i tich mi French en litrechɔ
di lek we a lek poetri
na dat Mis Koka gi mi

Misis Rayt in layt shayn bɔku say
na Ani Wolsh, Frabe en Miltin Magay
en i shayn brayt na Balanta
i bin fɛn tɛm fɔ rayt na nyuzpepa
en fɔ mek Ani Wolsh rɛjista
i nɔ bin de taya fɔ wok
i nɔ bin de tek wok mek jok

wi tɛl Gɔd tenki
fɔ we i gi wi
Mis Koka en Lulu Rayt
fɔ ep mek dis wɔl ya brayt

Daphne
Freetown 14/10/2018
Daphne Pratt

Today is a significant day in the life of the Academy as we open a book of Condolence in honour of another of our founding members Mrs. Lulu Wright.

This is the third time that I am performing this function for someone who was a founder member of a group that has made a difference to people's lives in Sierra Leone. It is a sign that our generation is now waiting in the departure lounge for that last and inevitable journey.

I first met Lulu when her husband Logie Wright who was then the Director of the Freetown Choral Group asked me as a schoolboy to be their accompanist in their Easter performance of Olivet to Calvary in 1958. Lulu was then a member of the Choral Group. I was struck by this elegant lady with a truly remarkable and beautiful contralto voice who had a remarkable range. The quality of her lower range was outstanding. Her rendition of "He shall feed his flock" from Handel's Messiah and "O rest in the Lord" from Mendelsohn's Elijah are etched in my memory, so much so that I asked her to sing "O rest in the Lord at my mother's funeral".

The Academy of Music was officially launched on October 25, 1995. Lulu was the first Chairperson of the Academy and served in that position for the first ten years in the life of the Academy. Her contribution to the establishment and growth of the Academy was immense. Her experience in teaching and in administration (she was Head of the Department of French at Fourah Bay College) helped shape the way she handled her chairpersonship of the Board of the Academy. She was firm, was a woman of indomitable will and determination who was relentless when she wanted something. She did all of this with that deprecating smile which was designed to disarm you.

In the words of the prayer for Holy rest we say:

O Lord, support us all day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world lies hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Our beloved Lulu is at peace.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my deepest condolences to Lynette, Dennis, other members of the family and to her wider family. Our prayers and thoughts are with you.

Tani

Tani Pratt

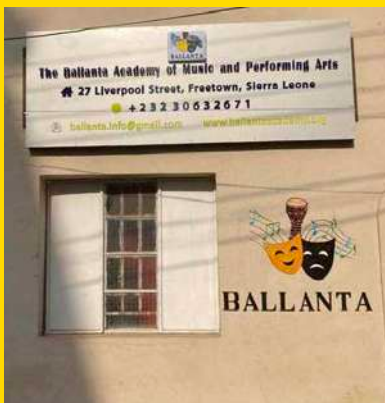
Kitty

As the first Chairman of the board of directors at the Ballanta Academy of Music, Lulu gave her services selflessly, and together with Logie as Principal and an able board, valiantly steered the academy to become the strong institution it is today. Needless to say, the academy grew significantly under her leadership. Her talents were myriad. I was a fervent admirer of her remarkable voice, which interpreted music as if she was a scholar of music! She was as comfortable in an acting role in Ballanta's 'Afiwa' as in the chorus of a Handelian oratorio. As for her writing abilities, I remember looking forward to her newspaper articles in the Awoko, where she would pick on a topic that she would want to address, and have a go at whoever or whatever was causing the public annoyance. May God take you into His arms, and the heavenly choir welcome you. Thank you for all you did for Ballanta and for Sierra Leone. All of us at Ballanta will miss your love, your friendliness, your graciousness and your lovely smile.

Kitty

Dr Fadlu-Deen

Principal, Ballanta Academy of Music and Performing Arts



Jonathan



Lulu performing as Phoebe Meryll in the Gilbert & Sullivan operetta 'The Yeomen of the Guard' with the Freetown Choral Society

"Tinnitus is defined as "The perception of... a ringing or beating sound which has no external source ". Although I sometimes experience this phenomenon, which is real enough to be addressed by doctors, I don't know if it is related to another phenomenon that I also experience. I sometimes 'hear', in my head, the mellifluous strains of J. S. Bach's "Slumber Beloved" from the celebrated "Christmas Oratorio", among others. And despite the fact that I have heard a few renditions of it by a number of professional contraltos, the version in my head is that by no less a singer than 'Aunt Lulu, whose inimitable voice restores the original meaning to the word, 'amateur', as applied to a person who so loves their art that she (or he) puts heart and soul into the performance. This unsung hero (pardon the pun!) is a star (no less) whose voice might well be subliminally reverberating in the cloisters of St. George's Cathedral in Freetown, among other places. Just think of the vocal range, the timbre, the diction, the phrasing, not to mention the very presence... absolutely first class!"

Jonathan Fitzjohn

Maryland, USA December 2018

Kay

Lulu is my 'other favourite 1929er'. She was born in the same year as my mother, who died fourteen years ago, and so provided me with a comforting reminder of mothers of that excellent vintage.

The Adjeis moved into 78, Doveridge Road in 2000 and it wasn't long before our family, living at 79 got to know and love them. Johari is only a year younger than my daughter, and my mother (of five) felt an empathetic admiration for Lynette (eventually a mother of four) and a particular fondness for Ato.

And then came Lulu! That lovely, highly intelligent, wise, kind and classy lady (definitely a lady), who was always interested in what others were doing. When in Birmingham, she was a stalwart member of that motley crew which calls itself St. Peter's Choir and we were proud to be part of the Christian Aid fundraiser for Sierra Leone, 'A Taste of Sierra Leone', which introduced us to the sights, sounds and taste of the country, and included excerpts from music by Lulu's husband, Logie Wright. She was an invaluable addition to the alto line, and we always kept her seat warm for her, awaiting her return while she was in Sierra Leone!

I also enjoyed our occasional lunches (too infrequent), latterly with Phyll Benedikz and Alison Sherwood, and her companionship at performances by our local Am- Dram Society, the Billesley Players.

So, a very sincere thank you to you, Lulu, from all the Stephensons - and from St Peter's Church who were always delighted to have your company.

And thank you for being my '1929er'.

With much love,

Kay

Kay Stephenson



Staneala

Mrs. Rachel Lulu Wright was an astute teacher of French Language and Literature. She exuded scholarship, class, and poise. I was fascinated by her posh, Cambridge influenced English accent and I marvelled at her effortless switches to well-polished French. She taught with skill and passion. Such was the impact of her French Literature lessons in our sixth form class at the AWMS that I often dreamt of lively assemblies of novelists, poets, and musicians of mid-19th Century literary salons of Paris. Translation classes were more down-to-earth. While ‘*thème*’ (translation into French) challenged my knowledge and understanding of French grammar, ‘*version*’ (translation into English) was lighter and sometimes comical.

There were five of us in Mrs Wright’s French class at the time. Returning our exercise books after assignments was at once an exciting, yet anxiety-inducing ritual in which she would painstakingly comment on every production, moving from the best to the next best and so on. I recall that sombre morning when I waited with bated breath, anticipating the worst after her comments on the first three assignments. At that point, I had a feeling of foreboding that mine was at the bottom of the pile. And indeed, it was. After the fourth commentary, she paused dramatically for a few seconds and, turning her eyes away from me, as if wanting nothing more to do with me, she addressed the rest of the class: ‘*Sylvia, Faithful, Irene, Mosen, have you ever... EVER seen a man with large breasts?*’. I froze in my seat. Irene mischievously whispered to me in the affirmative, while keeping a straight face, and mentioned

a certain male acquaintance with grotesque features. It was a miracle she escaped Mrs Wright’s attention. The message was clear. She was a no-nonsense teacher. She demanded, and expected the best of us: hard work, competence, thoroughness, near perfection. A true mirror of herself.

But all was not hard going. There was an incredibly soothing balance in our French lessons. She introduced a softness and delicacy through the poems and drama that we studied. Almost 60 years on, I continue to be enthused by Alfred de Musset’s ‘*On ne Badine pas avec l’Amour*’ (‘No Trifling with Love’). I was convinced that, conscious of our adolescent stage in life and imminent transition into higher education, she had chosen that poem on purpose to awaken in our young female souls, images of realities to experience and be wary of (*à ne pas céder à la tentation*), at another level.

Not preparing for Mrs Wright’s classes had dramatic consequences. She would send us off to the library to research content for our assignments. She not only taught us, but she also groomed us. Her watchful eye did not escape the palest of pink nail polish I had on one day. Only a cold and fixed stare on my nails conveyed her message. I proceeded to laboriously scrape away the offensive object with a blade. If it escaped your parents’ eyes, you were sure to be caught and put right by a teacher.

Thank you, Mrs. Wright, for cultivating in me a love of French and Francophonie. Your expectations were fulfilled. It is to your credit and in your honour, that I can register the profound

influence of your tutoring and grooming on my career over the years, as I scaled the heights from Head of the French Department at the then Milton Margai Teachers College, to President of the Sierra Leone Association of French Teachers, President of the Alliance Française, Board Member of the International Federation of French Teachers, to the prestigious Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Palmes Académiques by the Republic of France.

The transition from teacher to close friend in my adult years was one I could hardly have contemplated as a student that was once in absolute awe of you, and who wanted nothing better than to meet your high expectations. I will cherish our quiet, tête-à-tête moments. You were the perfect hostess. We exchanged confidences, shared ideas and commiserated over the state of the world. Your pride in my achievements only reflected your huge success and impact as a teacher of excellence. You occupy a special place in my personal Teacher Hall of Fame.

Like Alphonse de Lamartine in ‘*Le Lac*’, I wish time could stand still, so that like him, I can say:

“*Ô temps! suspends ton vol, et vous, heures propices!*”

Suspendez votre cours:

Laissez-nous savourer les rapides délices

Des plus beaux de nos jours!’

But adieu, my dear teacher and friend. Rest in perfect peace.

Staneala

Dr. Staneala M. Beckley

Filomina

Mrs. Lulu Wright, nee Coker, was one of the most devoted teachers at the Annie Walsh Memorial School. She was a leader in promoting excellence in teaching and learning, with a sense of mission as a highly educated, accomplished and sophisticated Sierra Leonean woman. Her French classes were very popular and served me well in later years as a university student in the United States and in England. Annie Walsh Alumnae (AWOGA) like myself, are grateful to Miss Lulu for being a 'Master Teacher' who also invested in our personal growth and character development, instilling in us qualities of integrity, dignity and high self-esteem. She was an excellent role model and someone who gave freely and willingly of her time to help us become good students, informed citizens and concerned human beings. We will always be grateful to her for her dedication to generations of students. She will live in our memory forever. May her soul rest in perfect peace.

Former student

**Professor Emerita, Filomina
Steady, nee Jones**



Lulu and Dennis

Judith

Mrs Lulu Wright is someone who has made an indelible mark on my life. As my teacher, I value the contribution which she made to my intellectual growth especially in learning English and French. I am equally indebted to her for the impact which she made on my attitude to life. Her ability to combine her professional academic role with the task of nurturing our wider responsibility to the development of our nation, was undeniable but almost imperceptible when it was happening.

Her guidance was not based on fear of repercussions if we did not do what she advised. On the contrary she would convey the principles on which she wanted us

to operate in a calm but decisive way. This gave us the impetus to succeed, not because of fear of the teacher but because we saw this as our own goal.

I recall that she tried hard to make the learning of French more realistic to us, and to get us to accept it as a living language which would equip us with a way of communicating, rather than just a contribution to our School Certificate results. To make the process realistic, she gave each of us a French name which she used to address us. My given name was Julie or something similar. This was presumably because it sounded close to my real name, Judith. I did not like the name at all, so one day I plucked up my

courage to convey this to her. I was a bit apprehensive that she might interpret this as merely wanting my own way. To my relief, she simply asked me what name I preferred. I told her, and the next thing I heard was her saying to the class, "Meet Simonette".

She awakened my appreciation of the role which education can play in Nation-Building, by getting people in different parts of the country to get an insight into the lives of others in other parts of the country. I noticed that the topics which she gave us for discussion had changed. On one occasion, our assignment was to write about how palm oil was produced. Some of us had never witnessed the production process. Yet this was a common process in many parts of our country. Eventually, I plucked up the courage to ask her why she had given us this topic which was not like our usual themes. She did not interpret my enquiry as a way of questioning her choice. She simply explained that she had visited other parts of our country and she wanted to introduce us to experiences which we might not have had, even though we lived in the same country. A lesson in Nation -Building!

Mrs Wright was not just my teacher. She was an Outstanding teacher. She encouraged us to explore unfamiliar territory. She nurtured us to look beyond the acquisition of knowledge so that we could pass exams, to the development of attitudes and skills which would promote Nation- Building whilst equipping us with academic competence.

**She was a Teacher; a Mentor;
a Nation-builder.**

**May her soul rest in perfect
peace.**

Judith

Dr. Judith May-Parker



An Appreciation of a Devoted Teacher, Mrs Lulu Wright

In my article in Builders, The Annie Walsh Story “which was published in 2009 I wrote the following about Lulu Coker as she was when she taught me at the Annie Walsh.

“The articulation of Lulu Coker in English Literature prompted a deep appreciation of the written word, regardless of whether it was in prose or poetry. Her love for and eloquence in the French Language was equally captivating, to the extent of generating an equal response from her pupils. That knowledge in French was extremely beneficial in interactions with French-speaking nationals in neighbouring countries. She was indeed a super teacher!”

It is with the same spirit of appreciation that I write to pay tribute to Miss Lulu as we say our final goodbyes to her. I would again commend her total commitment to the pursuit of the education of her “girls.” She was an exemplary and sensitive teacher, an attribute that has been instrumental in the development of my own personal ethics during the performance of my own role as a teacher. One could tell from the detailed red marks in an essay or comprehension answers that she has spared no time or energy in her assessment; it was evident that she had read the script thoroughly and, in the process, included relevant and useful comments for subsequent improvement in the content of the answers as well as the writing skills of her pupil. Similar patience and interest prevailed during French lessons during

which she encouraged us to practice and use the language confidently. To initiate a feeling of belonging as well as “an individual and personal ownership” of the subject and its culture, we were given French names which were used during French lessons. For someone like myself who loved English Literature and learning, her lessons were a real joy.

Miss Coker was a firm teacher! You knew by the rolling of her eyes and the tone of her voice when you were about to deliberately or inadvertently be stepping out of line! As a result, as far as my memory goes, no one dared to misbehave or attempt to distract fellow classmates during her lessons.

Even after retiring as a teacher of the school, Mrs Wright continued her dogged interest and active role in the promotion of the Annie Walsh message. She was instrumental and greatly involved in the research, production and publication of the first official Annie Walsh Memorial School Register and Builders: The Annie Walsh Story 1849-2009, mentioned above. What better acclaim can be made to her selfless and indomitable determination to perpetuate the image and achievement of the Annie Walsh Memorial School! She deserves countless kudos!!

Eva F Richards, 27th November 2018

Entry No 3244, Eva Francess Nicol, January 1950

The Annie Walsh Memorial School Register 1849 -1999



Daisy, Easterline, Catherine

Memories of our school days are always cherished flashbacks in which the teachers who taught us feature to a great extent. As teenagers we had a way of assessing our mentors, putting them into categories according to our likes and dislikes of our various subjects.

The subject of this write-up is Lulu Wright who taught me French in the middle school years as Miss Coker and also French and Latin in my senior years as Lulu Wright. She was a conscientious teacher who was on top of her subjects. She was liked by most of us whom she taught, an all-embracing verdict. Not every teacher had that same assessment. Our doing well in a subject was attributed to the teacher's expertise in her subject and her method of delivery. French was a favourite subject of mine, and we thoroughly enjoyed our forty-minute sessions.

An after school French Club, a brainchild of Lulu's, helped us to practice our spoken French. I'm in constant touch with Prof. Daphne Ntiri (née Williams), one of the numerous pupils of Lulu, who told me that Mrs Wright was her favourite teacher. I have had the privilege of being constantly in touch with her when she has been in England in recent years. The scope of this write-up permits me to refer to her as Lulu, but in reality, she has always been 'Miss Lulu' to me.

Daisy Smart née Tucker

Madam Lulu Wright a.k.a "Aunty Lulu" was a pleasant person to talk to and work with.

I first met her when she was Miss Coker, a teacher at the Annie Walsh Memorial School. She was a young, devoted and committed teacher of French. We all in our class of 1952 were given French names and spoke French during French lessons. The result was

that some of us wrote essays in French better than in English and can still understand French.

She was the school's historian as she was always relied on for the school's historical background for different projects.

It was her letter to ex-pupils if the Annie Walsh Memoria School that made them aware of the need to maintain the school's physical structure and to improve on the school's academic standards.

In the latter years she was a member of the Education and Curriculum Committee of the Development Committee of the Annie Walsh Memorial School. Her contribution in executing the tasks of this Committee was invaluable.

Aunty Lulu was gentle, approachable but confident, firm and fair.

Easterline (Antoinette) Palmer

Yes it is in the 1950s, we are in Form 2 at the Annie Walsh...so we start doing French... and Miss Coker is our French teacher.

As we worked with her... and she with us, we realised that she was teaching us French amongst so many other things.

Yes, having her as our teacher was an experience. An experience that touched so many areas of our lives it is difficult for the likes of us to describe it with words. It cannot be detailed, cannot be quantified... it is just acknowledged consciously or unconsciously... and often in hindsight.

As Miss Coker, later Mrs Wright teaches French or English she encourages you to make an honest appraisal of your potential and your need...so she will return your 6th former script with the remarks "Evidence of hard work and careful planning" Grade

43%. Thus, the sixth former in the learning environment will realize the need to work harder and plan better. Yes, Mrs Wright comes across as a fiend for excellence. Well aware that there are talented people who can score a century with a flick of the wrist, and that there are many others who also want to achieve excellence. To the not-so-talented but ambitious, she knows full well that excellence is well within their reach, but they must be driven by dogged determination and a clear idea of the target of their ambition. Then self-esteem can be honestly assessed, sensitively positioned, sensibly managed and never damaged. She will never pass you on the nod, so when Mrs. R.L. Wright says "It is OK" you can be sure it is alright... and when she says "It is good", you can be assured that it is not just not bad, it really is good.

And so as she taught us French or English she developed in us values like good will, forthrightness, perseverance and integrity amongst others.

And now I speak on behalf of many of her pupils and affirm that to have been taught by Mrs. R.L. Wright is a blessing ... and an experience... indeed a blessed experience.

Catherine Thorpe

Aureola

Dear Lynette

In 1953, the Annie Walsh Memorial School welcomed a member of staff named Miss Lulu Coker. She was to teach us FRENCH! The day came when she entered our classrooms. I was in Form 2.

Miss Lulu Coker was dark and beautiful. We paid close attention as she gave us our very first lessons. "Bonjour mes élèves", and she told us our answer, "Bonjour Mademoiselle". There! We were off learning French! Many of us enjoyed our French lessons and ended up taking French as one of our subjects for our West African School Certificate. I did very well and secured a Division II along with 7 others. (The school was not very happy with us as none of us secured a Division I). I went on to do Sixth Form. I was not a brilliant student, but I persevered and your mother encouraged me. In 1960 I attained the Orange Belt and Senior prefectship – all with the encouragement of your mother.

However, apart from the fact that Miss Lulu was my teacher at school, my family had a close relationship with her family. My great aunt, Auntie Carie and your grandmother were very close. The death of your grandfather brought them very close. Your grandfather (late) was from Hastings and so was Auntie Carie's father – they were all part of the Hastings Descendants. So, when he died, Auntie Carie helped and consoled your grandmother such that a bond of lasting friendship developed between them.

At the end of my secondary education at the Annie Walsh, Auntie Carie decided to send me abroad for my university education. She needed help as to how to go about it – and who did she turn to for help? Miss Lulu – your mum, who had been sponsored initially by missionaries and had done some of her university studies at Cambridge had, during her holiday periods, needed somewhere to stay and a wonderful couple, Pop



Some of Lulu's early AWMS gems - Back row (L to R): Cordelia Olotu née Johnson, Gracie Williams née Ashwood, Gertrude Osborne (deceased). Middle Row: Filomena Steady née Jones, Jean Palmer née Clinton. Front Row: Onike Bessey née Peters (deceased), Aureola Enwezor née Jones

and Mum Thorpe volunteered to take care of your mum. John, their first child was now married to Shirley – both late. They were more than willing to offer the same hospitality as his parents had. Any money given for my upkeep was used to decorate my room and to pay for the heating of my room as I really felt cold almost all the time.

John coached me to not only pass Maths but Credit it (I got an A – believe it or not!) and so qualified to matriculate. John also got through to the Education Officer of the Sierra Leone High Commission who finally secured a place for me at an external college of London University – North Western Polytechnic – now the University of North West London. We were among the pioneering students.

Now, because of my love for French, it was one of my subjects. That took me on travels to France where I actually climbed the Eiffel Tower. It was also at the North Western Poly that I met and became very close to the Librarian Ann Winsor (late) who introduced me to All Souls, Langham Place (the church by the BBC) and that, changed the course of my life. I am so thankful that I met Ann there, for I learnt what it really meant to be a real Christian – born again by the spirit of God, after confessing and repenting of your sins and receiving Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour. You can testify yourself because you

were a student at the Annie Walsh when I was a teacher there. John and Shirley have passed away but my link with the family is still very close, especially with Sarah and Julian (their second and third children). A week or two ago, I received a letter from Sarah telling me of her granddaughter's birth. Included was a picture. Julian is a shepherd and leads a very busy life, but he and his wife always make time to write and keep up with me!

You reminded me of your mum singing at my wedding – Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring – whilst your dad accompanied her and you were all present. From all I have written, I am sure you have concluded that I owe a lot to your mum for making my stay in England very happy and positively life-changing.

I really don't know whether I can call this a tribute. All I can say is that God used your mum to impact and contribute in shaping my life – to the glory of God, and for this I am grateful. God blessed her with a long life. It was a fruitful life and I believe God used it to develop her faith. So when I learnt of her passing away, I started praying for you – her children – and I will continue to do so.

Love and prayers always

Auntie Aureola

Aureola Enwezor (deceased)

Yvonne

Mentee's Reflection on Mrs. Rachel Lulu Wright

I believe everyone has a mentor. That person who guided you, supported you, moulded you, and most importantly, you looked up to.

Often times, when we are grieving a great mentor, we are not only grieving the memories or moments that we've had with them but also the lessons we failed to learn in retrospect.

It is as if we have lost our personal GPS.

What we can't see, in the blurriness of our pain, is that our great teachers have left us with a very detailed road map. A lesson plan, if you will.

And so did Ms Lulu. Her last and most impactful legacy, for which she sought the same level of avidity and relentless commitment that she possessed, is what is now commonly known as the Privatization of the AWMS.

Few know how we actually got to this state!!!!

Saddened, depressed and dispirited by the deplorable state of the AWMS, as it celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1996, Ms Lulu then pioneered a campaign to improve the AWMS through relocation and privatization.

Here's what she penned to the Old Girls in Freetown on 17th July 1996 inter alia... *"it is my firm belief that you and I as old girls, can work towards the privatization of our school, which seems to me to be the only way of stemming the tide of imminent degeneration and decline."*

Working through and with the AWOGA Freetown chapter and with the blessing of the then Bishop, Rt Rev J O P Lynch, she set up the Status Review Committee working thru three sub

committees – Finance, Relocation and Privatization.

In the same letter, Ms Lulu actually left us a road map to follow.

Such was her dedication to her Alma Mater – an exemplary and visionary mentor. A great Awogan who dedicated her abilities and capacities to achieving the best for the AWMS.

On a personal level, the first thing that endeared Ms Lulu to me was her persona. Cheerful, affable, motivational and encouraging, yet quietly assertive enough for you not to cross boundaries with her.

Registered in October 1934, with admission number 2464, Lulu Elizabeth Rachel Coker joined AWMS as a student and came back in 1952 as a member of staff, serving till 1965 when she left after 2 final years as Vice Principal.

Though she is known for her mastery of French, she also had a love for music which she helped with, especially in training the school choir for Prize Giving and Thanksgiving Services. She played the piano too.

She served as lecturer in the Dept. of Modern Languages at Fourah Bay College and rose to the position of Head of Department later on.

I was privileged to have her throughout my career - first as a student at AWMS, then as my boss at Fourah Bay College. She was a wonderful teacher, boss, leader, and friend, everything one could look for in a good mentor. It would be impossible to count all the ways she helped me in my career. She made working with her an interesting and memorable experience. Not only were you a fantastic mentor to me, but you also even taught me how to mentor other people. Thank you for being such a great role model.

Thanks for opening my eyes to new stages of opportunity and strength. I will forever be grateful for your guidance and kindness. There is hope in Ms Lulu's legacy!

Quoting from her letter again... *"I am sure that there are enough of us [Awogans] spread over many countries, who with our friends and well-wishers, could collect the amount needed within a short time."*

Ms Lulu was the catalyst behind the thirst for privatization. She saw a future in the AWMS. She dreamed growth and refreshing vistas of opportunity for the AWMS.

A true mentor never really dies. Their work lives on in us. And in the words of William Penn "Death cannot kill what never dies!"

Adieu Ms Lulu!!! Rest in peace! Paix a ton ame! Rest assured that the struggle for Privatization lives on!

Let us all then as TRUE AWOGANS put our shoulders to the wheel and "work with zeal" not only to fulfill the dreams of this our beloved icon but more so to bring back AWMS to its former renown.

Yvonne Thompson Kponou

**AWOGAN and AWMS
Development Committee
International Link**

Written on Lulu's retirement from the University of Sierra Leone

The End of an ERA

By Abibatu Ibironish Gerber



Lulu under the vines at 'Harcourts' in Chertsey - home of the late Joy (Royal Holloway) and Brian McQuade, friends for over 70 years, both of whom passed away in 2022.

My aim here is to pay homage to a great teacher, a great lady who, after forty years in the teaching field, is finally retiring from active service. I remember it as clearly as if it were yesterday, when we returned from the end of the Lent term vacation in 1952. We, pupils of Form Two, not only had a new form teacher, but also a new English and French teacher, all in the same person of Miss Rachel Lulu Coker fondly referred to afterwards by most of us as "Coky".

Her entry into the teaching world heralded for me, at least, a turning point in my school career. Here was this paragon of beauty, gentleness and erudition - she

had newly graduated from Royal Holloway College, University of London - as our very own form teacher! As a teacher of English Language, English Literature and French, she was also going to teach us these subjects. Thus, she would also be replacing our initiator into the intricacies of the French language, Madame Conton, of blessed memory.

The beauty and the magic of being taught by "Coky" never palled, whether she was teaching us Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night or What You Will" in the original (and in Form Two with astounding results), or Chaucer's 'Prologue the Canterbury Tales in Form Four, also in original Middle

English, (Coky was a lady who dealt in originals) or later, in the Sixth Form when she effectively and in a very interesting manner introduced us to seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century French Literature. She made French authors like La Fontaine (his Fables), Molière (his comedies), Racine (his tragedies), Beaumarchais (his masterpiece satirical comedy 'Le Mariage de Figaro') and Vigny, virtually come to life.

I learnt recently from her that nineteenth century French Poetry is her specialty. Small wonder, then, that she could communicate to us the grandeur and wonder in Vigny's 'Maison du Berger' and



Lulu's Retirement Party - with Jane Godwin

his "La Mort du Loug. "Coky" or "Madame Wright", to the many ex and present Milton Margai and Fourah Bay College students, has certainly made her mark in the field of education.

The international awards of "Chevalier dans l'ordre des Palmes Academiques" and, subsequently, "Officier dans l'ordre des Palmes Academiques" with which she has been honoured by France in recognition of her selfless and dedicated service in the dissemination of the French Language and culture, are fully merited. I only wish our country had been the first to recognize her but as Jesus Christ said in Matthew 13: 57: "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and in his own house."

Sierra Leone cannot say: "Vale", to you Madame Rachel Lulu Wright, but rather "Au revoir" for, as long as she is with us, in the field of Education in general and in the teaching of French in particular, consulting her could not but yield good fruits.

It is a by-word in this noble profession that no one can gainsay her integrity, her thoroughness in her every undertaking, her impartiality with her pupils first, at the Annie Walsh Memorial School, and later with her students at the Milton Margai Teachers' College and at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone from where she is finally retiring as Head of Department of Modern Languages.

One must also not fail to mention her genuine concern for both the academic and moral welfare of those she taught. She has never been known to accept dishonourable compromises; rather she would gracefully bow out of an uncongenial situation and allow time to prove her point. Madame Wright, mon idéal, mon modele, je te remercie - la nation vous remercie - je t'en prie, reste toujours auprès de nous - ne nous quitte jamais!

Miss Gerber in 1955 came first in Sierra Leone in the Cambridge School Certificate Exams. She was among the first set of four 6th Form Pupils at the Annie Walsh Memorial School from 1955 to 1957.



Johari's graduation – Girton Cambridge



With Zuben and Safia 2015



Lulu with Nick and Tunde



The oldest and the youngest of George Caulker's grandchildren – with William Caulker. Summer 2019



Lulu and Ato – After school surprise: Grandma's arrived!



Nail session with Safia



66 Wellington Street -where Lulu was born



MMTC - where she lived from 1962 to 1987



Lightfoot Boston Rd - where she lived from 1987 - 2023



Please visit to leave any memories or thoughts of Lulu
<https://www.forevermissed.com/lulu-wright>

FOR LULU AT 90

Still in speech and song in nurseries and lecture rooms

Looking down the generations she gives out counsel and advice

Ranks of former pupils themselves now grandmothers, fondly repeat her weekly parting words, 'à la semaine prochaine'

The weeks have turned to decades and the canvas rolled out wider

Her witty piercing comments on the passing scene forced pause on too hurried acceptance of edicts and fiats

Never flinching at a problem, she presses mind and will to a conclusion

Today kindly maturity spreads light and inspiration.

Professor Eldred D. Jones (1925 – 2020)

Freetown, November 2018





*"The friends we have lost do not repose under the ground...
they are buried deep in our hearts.*

It has been thus ordained that they may always accompany us."

Alexandre Dumas père