

# OAA 1980 AGM 2018

## Report by Outgoing President

(Nii Darko Kobina Adeodatus Asante)\*

Another year is ending, and it is time for me to report once again on our progress as a year group. The year has seen some notable achievements – the key ones being the establishment of the welfare fund, and the use of technology to ensure that members could participate in meetings wherever they were located – Our new constitution proposes to enshrine the participation of members residing outside Ghana. We have however also had some setbacks, including small disagreements and upsets that have disturbed our cohesion, and a continuing sense of apathy towards the year group...

We do however have our 2020 reunion to look forward to, and it is my hope that it will generate the necessary excitement to bring us together to determine where we want to go as a Year Group and give us the motivation to commit to working together to achieve our objectives.

Almost a week ago, I was walking through the infamous prison on Alcatraz, in San Francisco bay, and imagining the thoughts of those prisoners planning their escape from the island. Actually the prison did not appear anywhere as bad as I remember it being portrayed in the Clint Eastwood film “Escape from Alcatraz”, maybe the bright coloured paint made all the difference.

It’s been just over four years since I took on the challenge of leading our year group, and in some ways, it has sometimes felt like being a prison guard on Alcatraz. The “inmates” did not have a choice about being there, but they had a choice about whether or not they would cooperate with the guards and the system. Similarly, being a member of the year group is not really a choice we can make, but the extent to which we participate in activities and support the executive is a matter of choice.

Whilst the prison guards had some powers to compel cooperation, the fact is that the year group executive have none. So your cooperation and support makes all the difference to the success of any executive. Actually in the case of the year group, it’s not really clear who the “prisoner” is – and the difficulty with finding a successor suggests that unlike Alcatraz, the President is the prisoner and needs to find a way to escape confinement within the position! I am therefore grateful to all those who have courageously taken up the challenge of standing for executive positions in the year group. They are my “liberators”.

Seriously though, it has been an honour to be asked to lead our Year Group – yes there have been days when I wondered why I even bothered, but I do not take for granted the trust that many of you placed in me to take charge of the Good Company and to preserve and enhance the unity and sense of comradeship we share.

There are no “perks” associated with being President of the year group (at least none that I am aware of), and apart from the mild ego-boost one might get from being addressed as President, there is no benefit to being President of our Year Group. For some, this would mean that there is no reason to take on the role of President, but I would disagree. Serving in such unpaid (and sometimes unappreciated) roles has its own rewards if one knows where to look.

If we only do the things that bring us tangible benefits, we will never experience the blessing that comes from serving others. Our national leaders often claim to serve us, but we know that in most cases they only serve themselves, whilst they pretend to work for the country and its people. I guess we have all been infected with the cynicism that is plaguing this country, based on the philosophy of “each man (and woman) for himself (or herself)”, so we see the concept of selfless service as a myth (or a con).

I hope I am not wrong to hope that the Good Company to which we belong will buck this trend. Not by finding a way to provide material rewards to those who serve the Year Group well, but by honouring those who serve us by giving them our full support. Leading the Year Group is not easy, but we often make it an almost impossible task by complaining about everything, but contributing little or nothing to making things work. I pray that this will change going forward.

When I agreed to become President of the Year Group, there was not much of a Year Group, but with the support of some of you (and the appropriate use of technology), we now have a vibrant occasionally boisterous (but sometimes comatose) group. We have managed to support each other through bereavements, and also joined together occasionally to have fun (and some good food) together. There have been highs and lows during my tenure as President, but on the whole I think it has been a successful and productive tenure. My successes were however not achieved by my efforts alone, and I want to pay tribute once more to some of the people who have supported me through my term as President.

Blanko is the main cause of my becoming President, so anyone who is unhappy with what I have done over the years should go and take it out on him! Blanko promised me his support if I took up the position, and he was true to his word. I always knew I could depend on him, and in many tight corners, he came through for me. I also want to thank Pastor Strecho, the Bishop of Chorkor. He has been a pillar of support throughout my term, keeping my spirits up with some very questionable Whatsapp messages, and constantly checking up on me. I am also grateful to Presh, Pastor Nsiah, Yaw B, and the esteemed Fante Lady (whose threat of bribing me with “Bofrot” failed to materialise), for their support in various ways. I am also grateful to all those who side-barred me at various points to share suggestions and offer support, and of course to my fellow executive members for their support during our tenure. I just ask that you offer the same support and cooperation to the new executive when they take over.

Our reunion in 2015 played a major role in bringing us together, and the main task for the incoming executive is to organise our 2020 reunion. I trust that you will give them your full support – particularly by helping to organise the events when called upon, and by massively participating in the events that will take place.

The fun and fellowship we have when we meet together is great, but it cannot be all that we are about. My personal disappointment is that I was not able to inspire us to take up the challenge of giving something back as a core part of what the year group stands for. I share some of the misgivings I have heard expressed, about our financial support of Achimota giving government cover for shirking its responsibilities towards the school. I also agree that we cannot continually be asking members to contribute funds towards supporting the school. I however believe that in spite of the inevitable “donor fatigue that afflicts us all, we should “...not grow weary of doing good”. I do not think we should limit our support to the school alone, I think that we should have a programme of general charitable work that spreads beyond the walls of the school. This can be achieved without being a huge burden on our financial resources – it simply means that we would need to be modest in our projects, and seek to maximise the impact of every Cedi, Euro, Pound or Dollar that we contribute.

It is also worth noting that it's not only money that is required: career guidance, motivational talks and mentoring are important but lacking in the lives of students of Achimota and beyond. My recent experience with seeking blood donors also reminds me that we could even organise blood donation days – linked with some of our fun days as a virtually cost-free way of giving something back and setting an example for others to follow.

I know that the suggestion that we should pay dues is one that is anathema to some, but I honestly believe that the regular giving of a small amount of money is preferable to the occasional push to raise large amounts of money. I know there are many legitimate concerns about how this giving should be organised, but I hope that going forward we will be able to resolve this, and ensure that we have and maintain sufficient funds to support members who are bereaved, to run our year group and to provide base funding for all our activities.

We have started a journey together as classmates, and who knows where it will take us. Our last reunion provided the seed for a miraculous story of overcoming adversity and a life being saved. We were all, I believed, both touched and blessed by that story. What else could happen if we continue this journey together?

I believe the best is yet to come!

May God continue to guide the Good Company of the 1980 Year Group of Achimota School so that the living waters will indeed flow into a thirsty land.

May God Bless us all!!

\*Full name provided for those who did not know the origin of the "Adeo" ☺