



Keeping
The Flame of Hope
Burning for
Future Generations
of Achimotans

April 22, 2008

Volume 2, Issue 7



Common Room updates

Editorial - A Changing of the Guards



Early this month, the Achimota School Foundation (AC2010) hurdled another milestone with the departure of its dynamic team leader, **Akora Sam Kofi Darfoor** (class of 1980, Cadbury House).

His April 7th resignation announcement, citing his inability, "to devote the time necessary to this important work," follows an eventful 6-month period marked by amazing fundraising results.

During his tenure, the organization evolved from an informal group of concerned Akoras rallying to the aid of the school, into a formally registered organization that is successfully establishing a culture of structured giving towards the cause of building a legacy for Achimota School.

Assuming the role of ASF President by unanimous vote of the board of trustees is **Akora Kingsley Orraca-Tetteh** (class of 1968, Lugard House), Head of Radiology in private life with the Knox Community Hospital in Mount Vernon, Ohio, USA.

Akora Kingsley brings to this more hands-on role of President, his prior experience as Chairman of the organization's Capital Campaign, a role he has executed very well since the ASF's inception as **AC2010** in July 2006, through its evolution into the current **Achimota School Foundation dba AC2010**.

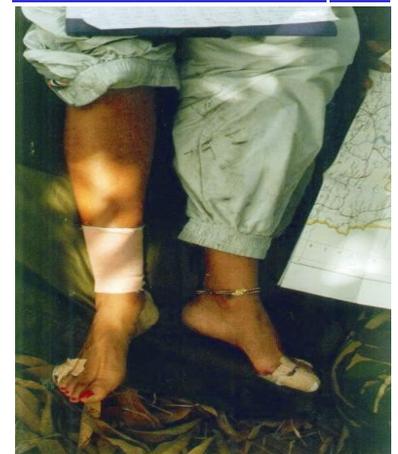
Akora Kingsley will continue to be aided in the steering of the ASF by trustee **Akora Mina Darfoor** (nee Otoo, 1980, Clark House) who will remain Treasurer, and by trustee **Akora Maria Gwira** (nee Kwami, 1981, Kingsley House) who now assumes the role of Secretary and Editor-in-Chief. As officers of the ASF corporation, they will continue to be supported from the UK by **Akora Asabea Acquah-Harrison** (nee Ofosu-Appiah, 1977, Kingsley House) who will be in charge of the organization's donor relations as Marketing and Public Relations Officer.

Today, the piggy bank stands at **\$124,722** - thanks in part to those who responded, without any reminders, to the Easter Drive that realized another \$11,148!!

Akoras and non-Akoras alike are stepping up to the plate and doing for our school what no one else will do, and a wind of change, positive change, continues to sweep over our community. For this we remain thankful to believers like you, the community of involved visionaries who can see a bright tomorrow for our school.

Inside this issue:

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A True Warrior is one who is willing to Walk the Walk and not simply Talk the Talk.

To find out how far these Akora legs went, read the full story in the LIVING WATERS section starting on page 2.

Have you donated today?

Visit: WWW.AC2010.Org

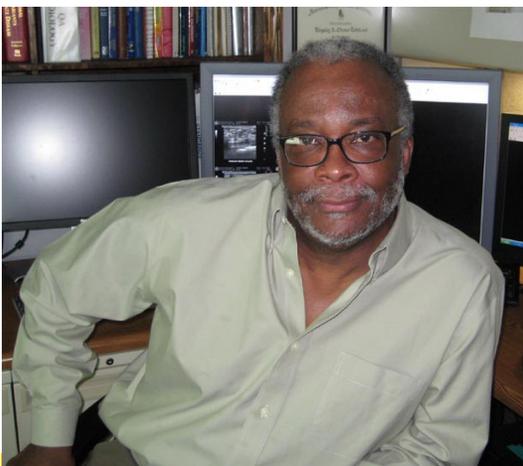
AGGREY QUILL RESULTS

The Winners of the Aggrey Quill Essay Competition are:

**1st Prize - Jessica N.Y. A. Donkor
Form 1**

**2nd Prize - Kwame A. Osei-Owusu
Form 1**

**3rd Prize - Rosemund E. Effah
Form 1 Science.**



Akora Kingsley Orraca-Tetteh
(Class of 1968)

President, Achimota School Foundation

VOICES : "Ghana is fast changing, and it is taking a toll on Ghanaians. Maybe, if we can ensure that future students enjoy the same experiences that we enjoyed in that safe and rich learning environment, then perhaps Ghanaians will be more tolerant of each other, appreciating the uniqueness of being Ghanaian rather than dwelling on our differences ." —

Gytha Nuno

Living Waters

Spotlight on Akoras who are changing the World around them...



Akora Gytha Nuno: A Walk on the Wild Side for Education

Despite having spent only two and a half terms at Achimota (year group would have been 1966, Kingsley House) Akora Gytha Nuno rightfully embraces her full Akora status. In this remarkable story of courage and determination, she embarks on a journey that no Akora has ever undertaken (that we are aware of), to live out the spirit of our school song, "From Gambaga to Accra."

The Gambaga Walker

Achimota was a child's paradise where nature was loved and respected! Together with my seniors, the late Tony Gbeho and Larry Lee, I used to comb the school grounds for injured birds, mammals, snakes and other reptiles which we would attempt to treat at the zoo (or oops, hidden in my chopbox, in the dormitory, or in my uniform pocket) and release back into nature.

Most of all, I learnt from Achimota, even though my stay was so short, that we are all ONE people, irrespective of our origins and can be proud of our country. I have never forgotten those lessons, that was why the theme for the Gambaga Walk was "Unity in Education" and that is why I continue to fight to save our environment. What affects one of us, affects us all. We sink or swim together as Ghanaians.

The idea for the walk came at one of those times when out of boredom, a sense of impending adventure and a need to make a change, one suddenly finds oneself outside the proverbial box! Well, that's where I found myself one cool afternoon in June 2001. The place was Labone Coffee Shop in Accra. I was attending the weekly Programs Committee meeting of the OAA.

Anyway, the Committee was considering various fund raising activities to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the School. Now, Achimota Secondary School has been in existence since 1926. One of the founding fathers wrote a song that we all learnt and began singing from the moment we entered the school: **"From Gambaga to Accra, from Wiawso to Keta, We are brothers and our mother is our school..."** And so as members of the committee discussed the



normal sponsored short walks through the city center, my mind wandered, and before I knew what I was saying, I asked: "Why not do something really different and walk from Gambaga to Accra?"

The stunned silence that followed gave me the time I needed to confirm within me that I could indeed walk the 600 to 700 kms from Gambaga to Accra (about 373 to 435 miles). It was just as well I went through that mental exercise because the next question, this time from the Committee members, was: "... and who do you think is crazy enough to walk that distance?"

And that's how it all began. But somehow the idea was put on the back burner until sometime early that September when I was called to another meeting to confirm that I would indeed undertake the walk.

I have always been very active, exercising in the mornings usually with a mix of 15 to 30 minutes of aerobics and yoga. So I *am* a healthy person. At 5 feet 4 inches and 51 years of age I weighed 57 kilograms (about 125 pounds). I am also an avid, passionate environmentalist who loves the outdoors. As a matter of fact, at this point in my life I was better known for my pronouncements in support of our wildlife and against bush-meat hunters, poachers and mining companies than for any great physical achievements! I was also known as someone who enjoyed activities such as swimming, and hiking through Rain Forests in pursuit of poachers and illegal chainsaw operations. Dancing, reading and listening to jazz and Caribbean music are my other passions.

However, I have *never* walked more than 10k at any given time.

And so I knew I had a grueling "race" ahead of me. Once I confirmed to the committee my readiness to walk, a sub-committee was set up to put the logistics together: training equipment, theme for the walk, support team etc. Unfortunately by this time, I had just a little under six weeks to train for the walk.

Now, I insisted that if we were going to "act" out the Achimota song - "From Gambaga to Accra" - then funds raised should go to schools all along the way and not just our alma-mater. The point of the song is that we Ghanaian children came from the four corners of our country - Gambaga, Accra, Wiawso and Keta (a town in the remotest corner of north-eastern Ghana to the Capital City situated south on the coast, and from a town along the western border to an eastern coastal town) to our school, Achimota, where we received an education that became the equalizing factor in our lives. We left the school as equals, no matter what level of development we had come from. Therefore the theme we chose was "Unity through Education" and a target of \$75,000 was set.

Once we agreed on a theme, I had to begin training. Access to a treadmill was arranged. Then I told my son Adolph about the walk. Naturally, he was concerned but seeing my determination, he gave me his full support and began "training" me. And so with the help of Adolph and his Dad (my ex-husband), my training began in earnest. First, they put me on a daily diet of protein, four to five consecutive hours on the treadmill at speeds of 5kph (about 3mph) and 4 to 6 liters of water a day (1 to 1.5 gallons.)

(cont. on P4...)





True Tales & Toli

From The Outlaws' Hill

Ose-ei-Yei! — GRAEME BALCOM takes us back to a familiar place and sound...

I sifted through my old records and came up with the following. It was in a letter that I wrote home, in April of 1963, to my family in Canada when I was a young teacher of Physics and Math at Achimota in the early 1960s. I lived in Bungalow #5 on the Oval with my wife Judy, our four-year-old son Lance and two-month-old daughter Tracey who had been born there in our Bungalow the previous January.

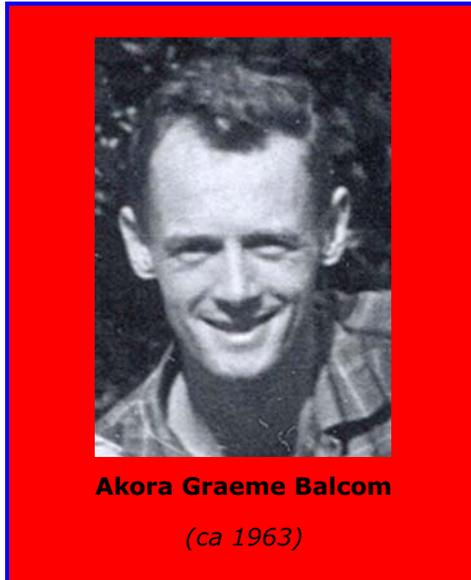
Reading this letter now I fear that some of my observations and conclusions might be too facile or inaccurate, but, be that as it may, this is how I saw Founders' Day Celebrations in March 1963.

It must have been an interesting trio: Reverend Alexander G. Fraser, the hard-boiled little Englishman who was noted for his work in secondary education in India; Ontario-born Sir Gordon Guggisberg, Governor of the Gold Coast and stubborn advocate for African schools; Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey, the soft-spoken, American-educated Ghanaian philosopher who maintained that "Only the best is good enough for Africa."



When these three got together they created a fine, co-educational school a few miles outside Accra while most white people in Africa were sipping their gin and tonic and decrying the hopelessness of Africa. Every year the entire school honours these founders at Founders' Day Celebrations.

It was pitch black that night and I don't know what it was that disturbed me as I lay sleeping but I was suddenly awake. Lying on my back I could see nothing and hear nothing but the muffled pre-dawn insect voices as the night dwellers crept away and the raucous day shift moved in. I had been awake only a mo-



Akora Graeme Balcom

(ca 1963)

ment when, loudly on the soft night air came the strident tones of the bell high in the Administration Block - it was five am. As soon as the last clap had tapered to a point and I was returning to sleep a piercing voice, old as the centuries, chanted from under my window,

"Ose-e-e-i Yei!"

A host of voices replied powerfully in unison,

"Yee Yei!"

Chills shot up my spine as the words of the official school yell poured through my window and out across the school compound.

I got up and looked out of the window. I could see by the light from the street lamp the Achimota Girls' Chorus as they invoked the spirits of the founders. The hypnotic rhythm of the chant was punctuated by handheld paddles clattering against each other in perfect unison.

The procession had begun right in front of our house but then it proceeded around the oval road that rings the compound. By then the spirits were invoked (so was everyone else within earshot) and the way was prepared for the main event of the day.

At 3:45 that afternoon all of us teachers and a lot of invited dignitaries were nervously, noisily waiting under the clock tower of the Administration Block when a loud

sound burst forth and tore the peaceful fabric of the air. Coming up the road from the school's gate there were hundreds of students walking, shuffling, dancing up the narrow road. Their clothing was, in contrast to the usual drab school uniforms, a confusing mass of brilliance with volumes of outrageous prints and Kente cloth swirling and folding in time with the music as the swaying, stamping students advanced towards us.

First came the Ga students from the area around the Accra plain. Their drums ranged from great thumping hollow logs to staccato tubes held under their arms. The beat was direct, infectious and happy. Close behind came the Ewe tribesmen from the trans-Volta and Togo regions with drums of even greater variety and a beat with subtle differences. The Fantes and Ashantis from the forests of central Ghana followed with yet another wave of synchronized and complex rhythms. Incongruously, one of the Fante dancers seemed to be pale of complexion - oh, yes, that is Fifth Former Bill Mahoney from Phoenix, Arizona, tastefully wrapped in a colourful African costume.

Finally the Northerners from the desert regions moved up with their gentle stick dance. I spotted Mike Lythcott, from Oklahoma City, dancing with the Northern Tribes. They turned and wheeled so that each boy's stick snapped against the next with a sharp click at precisely the right moment to punctuate the high-pitched tone drums. As they spun and twisted in their whirling dance, their long, striped, cotton smocks became whirling cones as the students turned to the halting four-step of their dance.

The dancing culminated in a respectful, whirling, bowing "ritual for the chief"

(cont. on P5, bottom)



The Achimota swimmingPool, ca 1963

The Gambaga Walker *-cont. from P2*



The idea was to build up muscle mass in my legs, increase my energy level, and hydrate my body. Temperatures in the North can reach 40 degrees Celsius (about 104 degrees Fahrenheit) at noon. On weekends, I walked the streets of Accra for five to six hours at a time.

Through these walks we calculated that I could reach speeds of 5 to 6kph. Therefore if we calculated the journey to be approximately 700 kilometers (435 miles), and if I could walk eight to ten hours a day, then at 50k/day the 700 kilometer journey could be accomplished within 14 days. To be on the safe side, I suggested 20 days. Later we found that it was lucky I had asked for 20 days, as the distance was actually 814 kilometers (about 505 miles) and not 700! Eventually I completed the walk in 19 days.

My routine was to be the following: wake-up call by 4 a.m.; stretches, bath; breakfast (spaghetti and egg whites mostly) then off by 5 or 6 a.m., depending on the distance I had to cover that day. I had a crew of four men. There were two drivers, one vehicle was to follow closely and shield me from approaching vehicles, the other to drive up ahead and control oncoming traffic. This was important, as the roads are two-lane roads with lots of curves and hills, particularly from the Brong Ahafo Region all the way to Accra, a distance of about 650 kilometers (about 403 miles). I was also accompanied by a cameraman who doubled as cook, and a military nurse who the army was kind enough to second to me for the walk.

After the first two days, I decided to start each day at 4:00 a.m. in order to avoid the hot, hot midday sun. Thereafter, wake-up call was at 3:00 a.m.. I would start walking at 4:00am and take the first break at 7:00 a.m. for an hour or so, during which time I ate an orange or had a chocolate drink. That was also the time to reapply deep heat and cold ointments to my aching feet -- (by the end of the first day I had blisters on my left big and small toes, as well as under the ankle and all along the ridge under the toes of my right foot, not to mention extremely sore and aching calves) -- then walk another three hours, break again, then a shorter walk till midday when we would break for two hours to stay out of the mean, midday

sun.

The crew would rest and have lunch; I'd have more fruits and cocoa drinks or just water and glucose mix. From 2 to 5 or 6 p.m. there would be no break unless I needed to reapply ointments or talk to kids in schools or along the roadside.

By this time the lead vehicle would move ahead about five kilometers and reconnoiter for a school with a veranda or enough trees and a water source close by to use as camping site. After unloading the cooker and other utensils, the cook would begin preparing dinner while the driver would come back to lead us to the site. Once at the campsite, a makeshift bath area would be organized either with a blanket shielding me behind some trees or tied around the vehicles. I usually had to wait till about 7:30 p.m. when the villagers, our hosts, would have satisfied their curiosity fully and were prepared to give us some privacy, before taking a bath.



Then came the worst moments of the day, because that was when the Staff-Sergeant nurse would tend to my aches and pains, mostly by aspirating the fluid from the blisters with a syringe, then massaging my exhausted leg muscles! I could then have dinner, either a fish or chicken stew with rice, yams or plantains, or a dish of rice and beans. Vegetables were not easily available in the North, but we made do with whatever we found along the way. By this time my camp bed and mosquito net would have been erected and I would go to bed, immediately after a brief discussion with my crew on logistics, shopping and any other needs. I would fall asleep watching and following the changing shapes and positions of the moon and stars!

It was always a treat to arrive in a town with a communication center as the crew could call their families and make contact with the organizing committee to report on progress or request for further support.

Meanwhile, I donated books along the way to a few schools and collected their wish lists from the headmasters and teachers. These ranged from a "bell for our school" to a "zebra crossing so the children can get to school safely" to "a ball and jump

rope for recreation time" but mostly, it was a request for "all text books" or "lots of library books."

Throughout the walk I would stop and interact with school children: those walking the "normal" 3-5k in the morning to get to school carrying their sitting stools; those in the classrooms that had no floors or windows; the classrooms with just one textbook for each subject, and loads of schools located under the biggest trees because there was no building. And still there were the children who shared one pen among three friends because they were too poor to each own one.

The story was repeated time and again along the route: brilliant six year old Salia in Bongbini who could read poetry yet owned not a book; studious 17 year old Azara in Pigu, sent home from junior high because her parents could not pay her school fees, who we found tutoring younger kids in the village, to students in Nebwam who all coughed constantly because their school had no floor and there was a permanent cloud of dust in the air! These are the children I walked for.

The European Union Office in Ghana promised to build a few schools for some of these deprived communities. A three-classroom block with toilet facilities, an office for the teachers and a storeroom costs approximately 170 million cedis (¢ 170,000,000.00) or about 25 thousand US Dollars (\$25,000). The communities would provide communal labour and sand.

My job now will be to continue to raise funds not only for the building of more schools, but also to find more text books, library books and other equipment such as globes, maps etc. for the schools.

I sincerely hope some of you will help by contacting Publishers who would be willing to supply books to the "Book Train" NGO I am setting up. The aim of this NGO will simply be to continue supplying books to the schools, so that the less fortunate children of Ghana can also have a chance to open their minds and dream big!

What's next? Well, the plan is to do a much longer walk in support of AIDs orphans. Join me for that too!!



For an update and more pictures, see P6, top.



Tsoo Bwei ! -- Updates on Projects & Initiatives

AC2010 Delivers Again! New Lawn Mower Shipped to School

ASF Treasurer, Mina Darfoor, has filed this report —

In November 2007, the ASF passed a resolution to procure a tractor mower for Achimota School. We had in the past seen several pictures of the grounds looking unkempt around the Snack Square, the Junior Science Lab, and the Girls' Gym, to mention a few places. The eyesore was at its worst during the rainy season when the grass grew two feet and became quite the host for mosquito infestation.

We discussed the procurement with Achimota School Headmistress, Mrs. Beatrice Adom and after weighing all the options, decided to purchase a tractor mower from the US market and ship it to Ghana.

We reviewed the market for tractor mowers. There was **John Deere, Bob Cat, Cub Cadet, Troy Bilt, Craftsman** to consider. We compared the various models, their horsepower, the ease with which they could be serviced in Ghana, and then in keeping with our loyalty to our donors reviewed the value for the best price. We selected the **Craftsman Deck YS4500** from a US Vendor. The mower was delivered to our selected shipper in the US familiar with the logistics of shipping to Ghana. The Shipper kept us updated on a weekly basis, until it was cleared by the agent in Ghana on February 29, 2008.

At the height of the 2008 Founder's Day celebrations, we talked to Mrs. Beatrice Adom. She conveyed the good news that the shipper's agent had called to let her know a Tractor Mower had cleared the Tema Port to be scheduled for pick up by Achimota School from their warehouse as stated on the bill of lading. On March 7,



Mr. Alex Fletcher trying it out the 'Little Red Engine that Could.'



2008, the Craftsman tractor mower we christened the 'Little Red Engine That Could' was safely delivered to the Achimota School Maintenance Yard. Mr. Alex Kwesi Fletcher, Head of the Achimota School Maintenance Department, beamed like a proud father. With the School's maintenance staff whittled to single digits and a shadow of the Achimota PWD, you could almost read Mr. Fletcher's mind, "We have work to do." The news felt like one giant leap for Akoras.

Unfortunately, with the arrival of the tractor mower, we also got a glimpse of the dilapidated Maintenance Yard filled with decrepit School buses and our beloved 'boneshaker' that could go for a handsome fee if auctioned at Sotheby's, perhaps. Our short-lived joy reverted to the magnitude of the work ahead of us. We are not daunted because we know Akoras and Friends of Achimota School such as you are committed to the restoration.

Since this report, fortnightly calls to liaise with Mr. Fletcher about maintaining the tractor mower which will include mileage readings are in place. During our last call, in Mr. Fletcher's own words filled with emotion he exclaims, "It runs very smooooth!" Cloaked in pleasantries but concerns about our continued support for the School, he goes on to ask us about the US and how AC2010 is doing. I tell him America is changing, and mention that the dollar is weaker than the cedi, but we are not discouraged. Mr. Fletcher responds as if to question, "Then Ghana is good?" I begin to assure him that in some aspects that would be true..., but the telephone card prompts me to say goodbye.

Another proud moment for the Achimota School Foundation, Inc. – dba AC2010. Our gratitude and thanks to all who continue to make things happen for Achimota School.



Ose-ei-Yei ! — cont. from P3

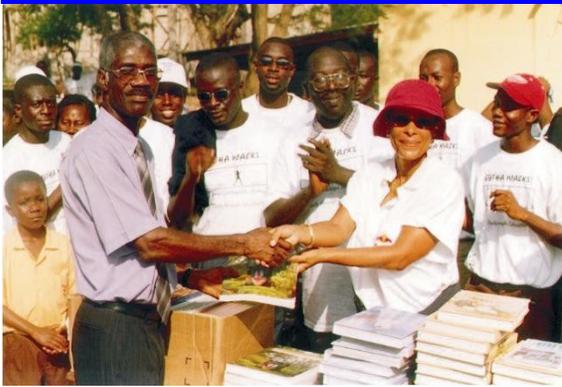
in this case Daniel Chapman, the Headmaster. As soon as all the tribes were assembled a hush fell over the waiting crowd. A tall, straight boy walked out and took his place in front of two "talking drums". He picked up his hooked sticks and began to tap out the traditional warning that all was to begin. The gentle "boom" of the larger drum and "bim" of the smaller one slowly increased in volume and speed until the drummer was leaning tensely into his drums, his little sticks flashing high as his two-toned thunder rolled across the hushed crowd and then slowly faded back to a quiet boom-bim, boom-bim.

(cont. on P6, bottom)

To find out how to feature projects and initiatives being undertaken by your year-group, house or other group, send your email enquiry to:

achimotaschoolfoundation@gmail.com

The Gambaga Walker –cont. from P4



Update:

As a result of this walk, the EU built two schools (Bortianor and Chiranda) and another (Nebwam) was renovated with the aid of Gassem. Additionally we have donated more than 8,000 books and countless pencils, pens, rulers, footballs, and other supplies to schools throughout the country. I still receive books and am always happy to drive out to distribute them.



**AKORA GYTHA,
CLASS OF '66,

WE SALUTE
YOU.

AYEKOO !!!**



Gytha Nuno is an Environmental Consultant – her NGO is EnvironCare Wagon-- and for eight years until September of '06, was a commissioner on the Board of the Forestry Commission, representing NGOs and Wildlife Conservation.

She is an ardent and passionate environmentalist, which last year earned her recognition by Osagyefo Amoatia Ofori Panin, Okyehene, in the form of Okyeman's highest award, "OKYEMAN KANEA" for services rendered to the Environment and the Nation. Akora Gytha has two children, Adolfo and Dhalia.

Osei-ei-Yei ! – (cont. from P5)

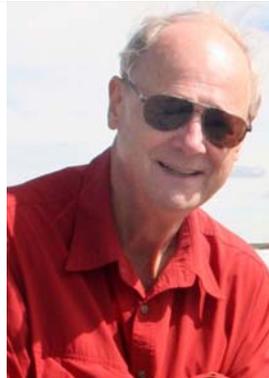
The quiet that followed was shattered when the entire student body launched into the school yell,

"Osei Yei!"

" Yee Yei!"

The whole, wonderful yell was more like a song, sung fortissimo and it riveted us to our seats with the power of its emotion.

I think that the spirits of Fraser and Guggisberg, having



been invoked, would have formally approved of the well-orchestrated proceedings, including the laudatory speeches that followed, but I am sure that it would have delighted Aggrey. The excellence of the school, the rich mix of different ethnic groups and the sprinkling of white skins in the crowd epitomized Aggrey's explanation that it is possible to play a sort of tune using only the black piano keys, and a bit of a tune on the white ones but for perfect harmony it is necessary to play both the black and the white together.

"Osei Yei!"

Editor's Notes



*We hope you continue to enjoy receiving this newsletter.
We welcome your comments and contributions.*

Your Submissions Needed for the following sections:

Tso Bwei! – Updates on projects & initiatives by any Akora groups

True Tales & Toli – Your recollections of school days

Voices – Snippets of your feedback & comments

Living Waters – Profiles of Akoras who are changing our world

Roll Call – Announcements of births, marriages, obits

Send your contributions, comments, questions and rejoinders to:

AchimotaSchoolFoundation@Gmail.com

All submitted material must contain the following information:

- Your name & maiden name (if relevant),
- Boarding House (if you're an Akora)
- O-level year group (if you're an Akora)

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AC2010 is not responsible for your interpretation of any ideas or suggestions contained in any of its publications. We reserve the right to edit any submitted material for clarity, length and decency.

Credits:



Front page picture of Upper Sixth Form Physics Class 1963;

'True Tales' pictures on P3 & P6

Courtesy of

AKORA GRAEME BALCOM



'Gambaga Walker' pictures Courtesy of **AKORA GYTHA NUNO**



For more information on the Achimota School Foundation, visit

www.AC2010.org

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