



## **Mrs. Joyce Owusu and her memories of yesterday's Ghana**

*In conversation: Benjamina Efua Dadzie (BD) for The Nana Project with Joyce Owusu (JO) and Elsie Owusu (EO)*

BD: Welcome to The Nana Project audio-story, an opportunity to share stories and histories of Ghana, through the experiences and knowledge of Ghanaian elders. My name is Benjamina Efua and for this audio-story I sat down with one of our elders, Mrs Joyce Owusu, whose memories of yesterday's Ghana provide us vivid accounts of our nation. We were joined by her daughter, Ms Elsie Owusu. Auntie Joyce was born in 1929, and experienced key events in Ghana's history, including the Second World War, the last Empire Day, and the visit of Queen Elizabeth in 1961. Our conversation is a mix of Fante and English, two languages we both speak interchangeably. We start our talk by outlining the places of her upbringing...

BD: When you were growing up in Aburi, how was Aburi?

JO: I didn't grow up there, I left when I was 8 years old.

BD: Ok, ok... and where did you go to live?

JO: I went to Sekondi.

BD: Ok...

JO: I spent 4 years there. After 4 years I went to Nsaba. My grandmother Harriet was a teacher at Kumasi Government Girls School. When she retired she went back to Sekondi to open her own school, which was St. Peter's, and that's where I went when I went to Sekondi. I went to grandma Harriet's school.

EO: How old were you when you went to grandma Harriet's school?

JO: 8.



EO: 8? So you were born in 1929, so you went to grandma Harriet's school in 1937?

JO: Yes.

EO: And you stayed there for...?

JO: 4 years.

EO: So that would be 1941.

JO: Yeah...

EO: And you were at grandma Harriet's school when the war started?

JO: Yes, I was 10 at the time.

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BD: Following her stay in Nsaba in the Central Region, Auntie Joyce moved to Nsawam, in the Eastern Region, to continue her education at the Nsawam Presbyterian Basic School...

JO: When I left Nsaba I went to Nsawam.

BD: Nsawam?

JO: Yes, Nsawam Presbyterian Basic School.

BD: Ok, ok... and when you were there did you see the British? The white people? Did they come to town or they didn't?

JO: Only the soldiers, they would march in town because they were looking for people to enroll as soldiers, so they would parade and march through town to attract young men to join the Army. Everyday



they sang army songs and marched through town, and then they would leave. What I remember during the war is... they said all of those who lived by the coast should use navy-blue curtains so that the soldiers don't see the light. So everyone used navy-blue curtains for their windows.

EO: They were blackout curtains so that the German planes wouldn't see the light and bomb the town.

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BD: 24th May 1957 was the last Empire Day in Ghana. Empire day was created and first commemorated on 24th May 1902 to mark Queen Victoria's birthday across the Commonwealth. Its purpose was to make children aware of their belonging to the British Empire. Until May 1957, thousands of Ghanaian school children would march and sing across their city, and salute the British union flag as a sign of their membership to the Empire. Auntie Joyce shares memories of Empire day when she was a school girl, and the songs she would sing...

EO: Do you want to sing "We're Going to Hang out the Washing on the Siegfried Line"?

JO: I sang it already!

EO: Do you know that song? Benjamina, do you know that song?

BD: No I do not, I don't.

JO: It's an old-time song!

EO: It's from the First World War isn't it? Mummy let's sing it for Benjamina!

We're Going to Hang out... go on...

JO: [Laughs]

EO: C'mon mummy let's sing for her!



JO: My voice is not good.

EO: No, it's lovely! You have a lovely voice mummy!

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BD: Auntie Joyce goes on to share the first time she heard of Ghana's President, Dr Kwame Nkrumah...

BD: Growing up, when did you hear Nkrumah's name for the first time? Do you remember?

JO: When they released him from prison.

BD: When they released him from prison?

JO: Yes, and when he appeared in public to give talks and the like.

[Musical interlude: "The Queen's Visit" by King Bruce & The Black Beats]

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BD: In 1961, Queen Elizabeth visited Ghana. Auntie Joyce shares her memory of the song Nkrumah and the Queen danced to, and who Prince Philip danced with, to the surprise of all the ministerial wives present at the dinner.

EO: Benjamina, this will make you laugh! I was talking to mummy about the State Dance, when Nkrumah danced with The Queen, and I was saying to mummy 'I wonder what they were dancing to', and mummy said 'Oh that's easy!'.

What were they dancing to mummy... They were dancing to "Everybody Loves Saturday Night".



JO: They organised a State Dance and people from all walks of life were there. And The Duke of Edinburgh chose a fat Makola [Market] woman to dance with, and he really loved “Everybody Loves Saturday Night”! He made them repeat it about twice. He really enjoyed it!

EO: The story was that all the Ministers’ wives were expecting to be asked to dance by The Prince, and instead he went and picked a very, shall we say, rotund Makola Market woman and danced with her instead. Lots of ministerial wives’ noses were put out of joint.

JO: Yes he preferred a Makola woman.

One of the Ministers was sitting near The Queen and was telling her “Your Majesty, it doesn’t matter where you sit, provided you have something to eat!”

[Musical outro: “Everybody Loves Saturday Night” by The Serendipity Singers]

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