



A Day in the Life ...

April 2018 - letter #94

Julie's family.

Dear Friends,

Last month's article was the beginning of the story of our life, me and Julie, about our families. The March 2018 article concerned me and my family, my parents and my siblings. These are responses to a request from a reader. It's giving me the opportunity to let those who do not know much about me and Julie, to know about us. If there is a topic you would like me to write about in a future article, please tell Pastor Rosy or the Ghana Committee.

Julie was born in December 1961, and therefore will be fifty-seven years old this year. Just like me, she was born in a coastal town Saltpond to a father who was a goldsmith and a woman whose main engagement was in retail trading in the market.

Both of her parents came from the fishing town of Saltpond but unlike me and my father's family, were not of the fisher folk. They just happened to live among people whose main economic activity was in the catching of fish from the Atlantic Ocean - and selling in the community. Therefore, the town developed related small businesses, like making of kenkey (from corn), bread baking, and the sale of foodstuffs from the nearby farming communities.

Julie's father never went to school. Her father was called Kwesi Kakra Koomson. Kwesi is the name given him as one born on Sunday; Kakra, meaning 'junior' is the Fante (our ethnic group in Ghana) name for the second of a twin. For every set of twins, the one who comes first is known as 'Panyin' (senior), while the one who follows (like Julie's father) is known as 'Kakra'.

Julie's father was a Catholic. History has it that Julie's father's descendants were those who migrated to the present site where the town of Saltpond was founded. So in a sense they were the 'owners' (landlords) of the land. Therefore, as I said in last month's article, Julie also comes from a traditional area where, even though they don't inherit chieftdom, her family is a significant group of the community of the Saltpond Traditional Area.

It is believed that Julie's mother met her husband-to-be while she was petty trading the kenkey and bread, and as she sold her wares to Kwesi Kakra, they fell in love and that resulted in their marriage.

Julie's mother also never went to school, yet was given a Christian name at her baptism in the Methodist Church. She therefore became known as Margaret Wilson (very interesting connection even though she is no relation of my father's, a Wilson himself). Later she became known as Margaret Koomson when her marriage to Kwesi Kakra Koomson was blessed in the Catholic Church (so Kwesi could go to Mass and receive the Holy Sacrament). Margaret remained a Methodist till her death in 2004. Julie's mother lived with us for almost five years, beginning in 1999.

Julie's father died in 1990 while we were in Liberia. We couldn't come home to attend the funeral because the Liberian civil war had just started and it was very unsafe to move around as a non-citizen, much less to leave the country at that time.

As mentioned earlier, Julie's father was a goldsmith. He would buy small pieces of unrefined gold from certified sources for legitimate reasons and turn them into earrings, necklaces and other jewelry. He became very popular for the quality of his products and was acclaimed in and around Saltpond. Her mother, Margaret, would occasionally take some of the jewelry with her as she went around selling loaves of bread, and kenkey.

Julie is the last of six children of Kwesi and Margaret Koomson. Just like in my family, among my siblings with two of us becoming priests (me and my little brother), Julie also has a brother who is now a Priest. He began his ministry as a Catholic priest but changed orders to become an Anglican (Episcopal) Priest. Incidentally, he is the first of the children born to Kwesi and Margaret Koomson.

Julie's family is made up of two brothers and four sisters as siblings, and Julie is the last born. Her senior sister, Jane, who comes after her brother the priest, worked in the same school, Mfantseman Girls' Secondary School, as the school Secretary. Jane was instrumental in getting Julie hired as a secretary in the school when we returned from Liberia. Another brother who had worked in the mining industry for a time is now at home, the result of a retrenchment of workers. One sister studied sewing at the trade school and set up her own small sewing enterprise while the other, a trained teacher, has now settled in Saltpond as a teacher.

Unlike me and my siblings who are not together in one place - not in the same town - Julie's siblings are all now residing in and around Saltpond. Thank you to our reader who was interested in our family. I'd love to answer questions from other readers.

Blessings, Pastor Ben