

*The Gift of
God*

which is

Within Thee

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance,
that thou stir up the gift of God
which is in thee

For God hath not given us the spirit
of fear, but of power, and of love,
and of a sound mind.

2 Timothy 1:6-7

Katie's Prayer

Pleasaunce Holtom

Katie Riley was one of those rare spirits of whom it could be said that merely to think of her made one a better person. It had the effect of lifting one out of a dark or selfish mood into a frame of mind where above all one wanted to be one's best for the sake of others. Katie expected it of her friends—she thought more highly of us than most of us deserved, and for her sake we had to try to live up to her expectations.

Katie died over two years ago. She had given the best years of her life to teaching the deaf; a novel she wrote about life in a school for deaf children was published in the twenties. It showed uncanny insight into how it felt to be a deaf child, and maybe her infinite patience and caring for others came from long practice. Later in life she married Jim Riley, and they spent very devoted and fruitful years together as Wardens of Clifford Street meeting in York. On their retirement, Acomb meeting near York was fortunate to have them, as it might well have closed down but for Katie's unflagging loyalty and service over many years, though sadly not for long with Jim.

What Katie *was* is written in the hearts of all who loved her. Her hospitality was phenomenal, the neat little house and garden providing rest and beauty. She delighted in helping her guests to relax, showing them lovely books or pictures, serving meals daintily. It seemed a joy to her to

live for others, and she regularly visited the lonely, the elderly and the sick. She sent little notes of love, always decorated with an appropriate drawing, and hundreds of such messages are treasured by many people. If someone ill or housebound needed her, Katie would go for weeks or even months to stay with them, though it was a real sacrifice, as she loved her own home and meeting best. More than once she had the arduous task of disposing of all the personal effects of a close relative or friend after death. When she began to feel her own strength ebbing she believed it right to go to a home for the elderly where she had long had her name on the waiting list. She spent weary months making preparations to go packing up and labelling and giving away all but a very few of her belongings, putting her affairs in order; for she had no close relatives left. She tried to be cheerful, but soon a place became vacant and it was with sad foreboding that she sold her house and moved. Clearly this was done in response to a 'leading', and at considerable cost.

Katie was not a 'public Friend' but she was of the very stuff of the Kingdom. It seems right now to tell of a most unexpected and beautiful discovery I made while a visitor in her home. For years it seemed too sacred and personal to publish what I have come to call 'Katie's Prayer', but reading it recently in an intimate circle I was begged for copies of it, and I believe it must now be shared.

I had picked up a Bible from the bedside table, and out of it fell some loose pencilled pages in Katie's hand. Hesitantly I glanced at what was written, and though feeling rather guilty, I could not stop. It was the outpouring of a full heart, no doubt jotted down by Katie during some

restless night. Deeply moved, I felt compelled to copy it for myself, and not until her memorial meeting did anyone know of it. If I did wrong, I believe I have long ago been forgiven. More likely it was no mere coincidence that I found it; such happenings seldom are.

I think it would be a mistake to shorten or edit 'Katie's Prayer' in any way. Countless people she loved and helped will witness to the fact that this prayer was answered over and over again.

Katie's Prayer

Desperately we commit to thy care the years of our life that are before us. Give us strength to be of service to our fellows. May our lives shine so that others feel the warmth of thy spirit. It is the warmth of our spirit overflowing among others who seek, who are ill, who are lonely, for which we pray. We would become people who add to this small world's knowledge of Truth. People whose very presence heals. Tranquil people, in whom the loneliness of others is stilled.

We see through a glass darkly—but may we be given a vision that enables us to transmit through our own personality what we see of permanence and of value. We realize that the meditations of our hearts influence not only ourselves, but others. We pray that our thoughts shall be pure, that their very purity may bring healing to ourselves and to others.

Often we lie in bed at night and toss and turn. May we be enabled to reach out to Christ, the centre of centres—

and find rest and stillness, and having found it may we be enabled to radiate this stillness to others.

We pray from the depths of our hearts that we may be more worthy followers of thee. We pray to be absorbed—to be made one—with all the goodness in the world. We know we are surrounded by an ocean of darkness but we know that there is an ocean of light. It is into this ocean of light that we desire to move, and into which we would carry our sick friends.

Help us, O God, to identify ourselves with all who suffer. Yet help us to move forward with a gladness that is infectious. We pray that we may discover how to remain young, gay, enthusiastic, full of enterprise. A smile inward and outward; a means of facing with sweetness and gentleness whatever befalls us.

Reprinted with permission, April 1981 *Quaker Monthly*, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ, England

Mama Rosoah

Judy Palpant

"Wife, mother, hostess, 'P.R. man' and 'Jack of all trades' " are some of the ways Judy Palpant describes her role at Friends Hospital, Lugulu, Kenya, where her husband, Sam, is chief medical officer. She has a degree in elementary education, and currently teaches the two eldest of their three children at home.

Wherever we have lived, people have made the difference. The humidity and the gray skies of Pennsylvania could be endured because God had given us a dwelling place among people. Again the hot, dry desert of Arizona could be tolerated because it was of secondary importance to the people among whom we lived, worked, and worshiped. And here in Lugulu the pattern has once again been repeated in our lives.

After our arrival, one of the first people I heard about was Mama Rosoah Mutua. In those beginning, lonely days, I grasped at every straw of information about *people*. So my ears perked up when someone said, "You know there's a widow named Mama Rosoah who, despite her 80 years and disabling, arthritic condition, climbs the hill every morning to lead the staff prayer time and to visit and pray with patients." That was my first introduction to Mama Rosoah. Even this glimpse, though I'd never met her or seen her, gave me reason to pause . . . and ponder. My curiosity was aroused. As I

would welcome her in our home or receive her gifts of beans, potatoes, or bananas, I would often ask myself, "What is Mama Rosoah's story?!" Over the past three years, I have learned more about this woman whose name is a household word. She is the grandmother of this area; and for years her life has been an example as a woman evangelist, a hospital chaplain, and wise counselor.

Like David the Psalmist, she began her life caring for sheep. She was a 16-year-old shepherdess in 1917 when she first heard Bwana Ford preach. After hearing him preach on one occasion, she prayed, "O God, take me and let me learn so that I can understand." In 1919 she joined the Friends Mission in Lugulu and began to learn to read and write. She learned to read by studying words stamped on cloths. To this day she wonders how she learned to read. To her, literacy was a gift from God and with it came growth as a Christian. She was married in 1921 to a non-Christian. During the next 10 years, she bore 8 children, 4 of whom died. In 1928 her husband was converted and they often preached together until his death in 1931. After serving as the matron at the Kaimosi Girls' Boarding School, she joined the Bible School in Lugulu in 1943. Upon graduation in 1946 she began preaching on a greater scale.

One day I met her walking laboriously up the hill, leaning on her walking stick. When I asked her about these early travels, she stopped and looked out across the maize field to Mt. Elgon. Her clear mind reached back to the days before vehicles when she went by foot to Kaimosi with a baby on her back and a basket of provi-

sions on her head. Called by the Yearly Meeting in 1921 to be a preacher, her evangelistic treks took her to the Karamajong and Bugisu districts of Uganda as well as to Mt. Elgon and other parts of Kenya. In her own words . . . "I went alone, guided by the holy presence of God." Preaching at "barasas" (chiefs' meetings), funerals, or other gatherings, she grasped every opportunity to proclaim the salvation message. In recent years at Yearly Meetings, people have come up to her and said, "You are the one who brought me to Christ. Do you remember?" Many claim to be among her children. The walls of prisons and denominations have not been barriers to her. She is known even in urban areas, because she has preached in the prisons. The first letter she ever wrote was sent to Kitale Prison asking permission to preach at the opening of the prison. Because of her open approach and desire to bring all people to a knowledge of God regardless of their denominational stance, she has been welcomed to speak in many churches. Her evangelist's heart has often sent her after wayward lambs in the flock of God. Some of them have listened to her words and have returned to the fold. The man who is a co-chaplain with her at Lugulu Hospital was one of those wayward lambs.

Not long ago, Mama Rosoah visited our home. While we were talking, a recently widowed woman came. She was obviously distressed. Mama Rosoah talked with her in Bukusu. Though I could not understand the words, I sensed that Mama Rosoah was reaching out her strong hand to this widow and ministering to her deepest needs. At one point, she broke into song. As I

listened to her deep, husky voice with a Navajo-like-lilt to it, I knew that she had kept her feet on a steady path so that now she could help this widow recover her strength. (Hebrews 12:13) Mama Rosoah's gift as a counselor was recognized even in the 1940's when she was a Bible student and Lugulu had only a dispensary. If a patient came with something on his or her heart, the medical staff would say, "Call Rosoah to come." Patients still "call Rosoah to come." Many of them send their children or family members to search for her at her home or at the market so that she can come and have a heart-to-heart talk with them and pray for them. Since 1968 she has helped to lead the morning prayers for the hospital staff at Lugulu followed by rounds on the wards where she shares and prays with the patients. In her youth, she traversed far and wide with the gospel message. Now in her old age, she has come home, so to speak, to serve as a chaplain in the hospital and as a pastor in the church. Her role in caring for the souls of patients has played a large part in keeping this hospital a Christian institution. Because this is her calling, one person said, "She cannot feel tired of helping patients." Though weak in body, she is strong in spirit.

One definition of a Quaker woman is: one who sees a need and does something about it. For years Rosoah Mutua has been an example to new generations of young women; she is a woman who has not diluted her faith by mixing it with traditions. She took a stand in her youth at a time when it was very difficult to cut ties with traditions. Her age and wisdom have made her an expert in the field of traditional customs versus the Christian

way. She has a rich knowledge of the Christian family life which qualifies her to advise youth. She can often answer their questions when others cannot. Not only has she called for spiritual renewal but from the earliest times has called for physical hygiene as well. On her home visitations she was always concerned about the nutritional and health habits of the families. Her attention to these matters in homes made her a pioneer in community health. Of course, the present-day need for reconciliation among East African Friends has been touched by her wisdom and counsel. With a clear vision of the situation, she neither condemns nor defends. She has counseled both factions and has never given up hope. "We SHALL come together," she says, "on that day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

Mama Rosoah is now 82 years old. As one lady said, "Rosoah's mind is on heaven these days." She is the personification of one of her favorite verses: John 15:7 where Jesus challenges us to let his words live in our hearts. She is at home in both the Old and New Testaments. When I asked her what message she has for us today, she quoted II Timothy 3:1-5 where Paul says that in the last day people will be lovers of themselves. She proceeded to say, "Long ago if a member of the church was ill, all the women would go to the shamba (farm) to dig and to help. Nowadays, they won't. Very few go." She is still confident of her own calling. "In spite of my old age and aching bones and joints, I am determined to serve my God with gladness up to the day he calls me back to the Glorious Kingdom."

Rosoah Mutua was not mentioned in the list of Great Living Quaker Women which I scanned not long ago. I couldn't help but remember how Jesus defined greatness. "If you want to be great in God's kingdom, learn to be the servant of all." Mama Rosoah has served people from a cross-section of tribes, ages, denominations, and needs. Finally, in her own way, she has served my family and has been one of those people who has made living in Lugulu a challenging, worthwhile experience.

Reprinted with permission, June 1983, *Quaker Life*, 101 Quaker Hill Drive, Richmond, Indiana 47374

A Prayer for the Aging

Lord I thank you that I am aging. For many folk it is an impossible privilege. To know this blessing gives every day a fresh reason to wonder. I thank you for the joys which I can now suddenly appreciate—for the freeing of my fingers from worthless business, - for a more simple life, - for songbirds meeting in flight over a sunlit field, - for moments of tranquility in which to nurture a faith in your past blessings, - for holy times when everything falls into its rightful place, and heavenly pleasure absorbs all the world's sad bustle.

Father in heaven give me a consciousness of the beauty of the autumn of life, - a time to fulfill, a time to harvest. Let old age be seen as part of your plan for the world and for us, so that the years may weigh, not as a burden, but as a blessing upon us. Free us from self-pity which shrivels up the soul. Although our wrinkles increase and our bodies tire, do not wither our spirit. May every new hour be worthy of enquiry.

If the appetite for food wanes let our eyes forever tenderly taste other nourishments—consume the daybreak, - make a feast of the star-light. As Job did let us understand the order of the planets is of more consequence than the sores on our own failing body. Although our money is limited let us give our love

generously every day. And take time to live some minutes on tiptoe drawn by the eternal city across the hills of time.

Excerpt from a letter from Olwen Palmer to New Zealand Wider Quaker Fellowship members. Original author unknown.

The Wider Quaker Fellowship (a program of The Friends World Committee Section of the Americas). 1506 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102-1983.

