

Tribute to Gladys Victoria Sumner 29th April 1930 – 2nd May 2015

by her niece Mrs. Claudette Harding



Gladys was many things to many people; loving and devoted wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend. This is reflected in the number of well-wishers here to bid her a final farewell today. To me she was aunty Glad and mother wrapped up in one.

My beautiful, generous, loving aunty Glad was in my life from day one. It was she who was there to comfort and support my mother, her younger sister, when she went into labor with me, and was to later support my mother as she tried to cope with a young baby in a foreign land. Aunty Glad told me that was when her love for me started.

Aunty Glad being the caring sister that she was, was willing to risk her good name and reputation as a young lady returning home from the UK, when she offered to take my younger sister and I back with her so that my mother could complete her studies without having to worry about caring for two young children.

She would often tease me about what I said after my parents handed us over to her at the dock. I apparently said: "mummy's gone, daddy's gone, its aunty now" How profound! It was indeed aunty now for the rest of my childhood and into adulthood. Aunty Glad effectively became my mum. When I had my son aunty Glad duly nominated herself his "grandy." She was from that point on known as grandy to all her grandchildren.

Shortly after returning home aunty Glad met and married Uncle Victor, who no doubt quickly spotted the gem that she was. Once they became settled into married life, Aunty Glad took both my grandma and me into their home to join their young family. I was brought up side by side with aunty Glad's children, Alfred, Lucy-Ann and Lenny; my friends became their friends, and their friends became my friends.

I always thought of Aunty Glad as my grandma's commander in chief. As the eldest child aunty Glad took the responsibility of looking after her younger siblings very seriously, this extended to her nieces and nephews and over time she became the matriarch of the family.

Aunty Glad opened her heart and her home to her sisters and all of her nieces and nephews. She was devoted to caring for and ensuring their wellbeing all through her life. When Aunty Glad and Uncle Victor left for the UK as High commissioner to Great Britain, Spain, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, she never stops looking after her extended family. My grandmother,

sisters and I looked forward with great anticipation to the regular tea chests laden with goodies from England. There were also clothes toiletries and lots more. Aunty Glad only had to get a whiff about us needed something and she was sure to have it sent promptly.

She also opened her home to dozens of other children in her lifetime. She cared for all of them as if they were her own.

When I joined the family in the UK in the mid 1980s there were at least a dozen children living with the Sumner's at Ingram Avenue, Hampstead. These were not mere lodgers; they had in fact become part of the Sumner family. Aunty Glad took these children into her heart; she provided them with a home that was full of love, fun and laughter. They could not have asked for more.



Aunty Glad loved people, a loving daughter, dotting parent and grandparent, loyal friend, and generous to a fault. She was a born nurturer. Some of her happiest moments were in the kitchen. She cooked the best Jollof rice ever! She simply loved cooking and feeding people, taking great pleasure in seeing people enjoy her food.

Teaching was her other passion. It was for her much more than a job, it was a vocation. She would often talk about her pupils like they were family. She went beyond the call of duty to ensure their wellbeing and to support them to reach their full potential. She was like a proud parent when she learns about their many achievements knowing that she may have in some small way contributed to that child's success.

Aunty Glad you have left a massive hole in our family. Words can never express how much you will be missed; we will forever hold very fond memories of you. We bid you farewell in the words of the hymn writer:

“Sleep on beloved, sleep and take thy rest;
Lay down thy head upon the Savior's breast;
We love thee well; but Jesus loves thee best;
Goodnight! Goodnight! Goodnight!”

May her soul rest in peace