

It is a privilege to present the Tony Cheeseman Foundation 2014 community trophy to our dear Elder Donna Keizer. At our last lecture we presented Sam King MBE who came to this country on the Windrush ship with a similar trophy for his community services. This year we have chosen Donna for her valuable contribution to the nursing profession and her services to Caribbean elderly in the borough of Newham.

However, before I present the trophy I believe you would like to know something about the person we are honouring.

So far this year there have been a lot said about World War1 on the TV and the press as Britain commemorates 100 years of the start of the war which ended in 1918.

That year is also significant for us here this evening, as it is where the story of Donna Keizer began on the Caribbean island of Barbados 96 years ago, to be precise on the 2 February 1918 Donna was born. Her childhood was a happy one and she have many good memories of her school life at St Matthias.

At 16 she began work as an apprentice seamstress which lasted for a few years and then her long career of caring for others started as a student nurse at the Barbados general hospital, she also worked at the Beckles Road Alms house and at Dr Bailey clinic as a nurse. One of her memories of the time was treating some of the casualties of the Cornwallis which was torpedoed in the harbour and which brought home the horrors of the 2nd world war on the island doorsteps. Her next move was to complete a mid-wife course at the maternity hospital in Whitehall St Michael and still had time to fit in a domestic science course which turned out very timely. She was recommended to be interviewed for a housekeeper post for the high profile show biz lawyer David Jacobs who was a regular visitor to the island and for whatever reason wanted a Barbadian housekeeper to look after his Chelsea's family home in London.

Donna took the job but explained that she was heading for the mother country in any case to study for her nursing exams and agreed to pay her own fare. At the age of 34 in 1957 Donna left her family and only son Norman who is with us this evening and may I take this opportunity to thank him and his daughter Annett for bringing along Donna and making it a family occasion on mothering Sunday.

Her experience in Chelsea was very interesting with a mix of curiosity with her colour and the surprise of her being a house keeper, she was given a poodle by

the family as a present and just imagine our sister proudly walking around Chelsea elegantly styling with her little doggy on a leash. She met many famous people like Liberace and Eartha Kitt to name a few who were regular visitors to the Chelsea home and also the family home in Brighton.

You have heard the saying you can't keep a good woman down and in 1961 Donna felt it was time to move on to pursue her dream. She applied to Plaistow teaching hospital which incidentally is the street above us but did not get a response so on the second occasion she pulled some rank and got the support of the Royal College of midwifery to support her application which got her accepted.

The second part of her training was done at Forest Gate maternity and after qualifying she applied for a midwife post at the same hospital and was successful. I would like you to take a moment and picture Donna riding around the Borough during her training on a bike visiting mothers and babies as nurses did in those days.

She rose in rank becoming a staff nurse and then a sister where she trained, supervised and delivered many, many, many babies for 18 years until her retirement in 1981.

It so happen that one of those babies you delivered in 1970 was my daughter Michelle who have sent a big thank you all the way from Barbados. She has also asked me to congratulate you on your community award.

Sis & Bros there was no stopping Donna after her retirement, she went on to work as a volunteer at West Ham Lane day nursery and also at the Newham Volunteer Bureau for some years.

The next phase in Dona's exciting life was with the Hibiscus Caribbean Elderly which was co-founded with her nursing colleague the late Lucy Tate in the late 1980s. I can remember giving the group space to meet and offering them support when I was the manager of Forest Gate Youth Centre in the early 1990s.

One of the association successes was getting a care home for Caribbean elderly in Romford Road and it is great to know that Hibiscus centre still runs a successful day centre in Forest gate. Donna it was a pleasure visiting your home and speaking with you and Norman to get this information about your

life. Ladies and Gentlemen I would like to share with you the two message that Donna said she would like to leave with us.

1 'Don't let being Black keep you back' and (2) Be conscious of the importance of serving others.

Donna the words on your trophy read Honouring Donna Keizer for her services to the community in Newham Presented by the Tony Cheeseman Foundation Uk. March 30th 2014. Donna it was not an easy task selecting a suitable trophy for a special person like you but when we saw the star on this one we knew we were on the right track because Donna Keizer you are our star this evening and we love you. Congratulations