

“The Swimming Years” – A Son’s Loving Tribute to His Father!

By Akora Pinnock Casely-Hayford
Achimota School, Class of 1969

September 2010

The Scared Kid

My earliest recollection of an encounter with water en masse was from my Dad’s (Beattie) constant teasing about how scared I was of the sea. He had taken us to the beach and introduced me to the water at age 1 and I had balled my eyes out. He had proof of the encounter on an old audio reel to reel tape and it was very embarrassing for me to hear myself wailing so pathetically. But two things were clear to me, first, that ‘kid’ was crying more from respect for the power of nature and secondly, the situation would have to be changed soon in the future.



Fig. 1: Mr. Beattie Casely-Hayford

Beattie was a very sensitive man and though he expected good performance from his five boys he did not over push them. He allowed personal evolution. Beattie was a beach lover and when we lived at Chorkor I remember us going swimming at sundown after he returned from work in the evenings. He loved photography and as an all-round hobbyist, would develop his own prints at home in a dark room, and one of the photos that survives to this day is that of my younger brother

Syd and I, naked on the beach. The law laid down on us then was, ‘no swimming trunks until you learn to swim’. We had no formal lessons in the water except safety on the beach and Beattie kept an eagle’s eye on us at Apam beach every Boxing Day and other Sundays. For years it was just fun and sporadic moments of courage and encounters with heavy waves knocking us off our feet as we played in the shallows.

At nine, I was still not able to tread water or doggy paddle and in the KNUST primary boarding school we were excited when the Olympic sized pool was slated to be opened. I sent a letter off to Beattie to buy me an inflatable ring. It was my last year and the Common Entrance exam was on, I was pointed to Achimota Secondary School the coming September.

All permits were signed up by parents who wished their kids to swim and on our first day to this magnificent pool. One of our English teachers, name long forgotten, was our swim instructor. Dr. R. P. Baffour was the Vice Chancellor and took a keen interest in all activities even down to Primary School level.

We got through the showers and disinfectant pool drills and all lined up at poolside and there I was with my inflatable, not taking chances with any ‘water en masse’, and I get singled out with the blow of a whistle and a sternly pointing finger, ‘Get rid of that thing this very minute!’ I scurried away to deflate and put it away in my locker and returned to the lineup and our first intro to chlorinated water. My elder brother, Leo, was swimming well and diving off the highest board at this stage and his high board partner was Timothy



Fig. 2: Ralph & Sydney Casely-Hayford at Apam Beach, 1957

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Fig.2: from left -- Ralph, Leo, Sydney & Pinnock Casely-Hayford, 1957

Harris, (would be nice to locate him sometime). Another lesson followed; then the holidays and end of Tech Primary for me.

It was my best summer that year of '64, Beattie had bought two boats and we refurbished them in the yard at home behind the Arts Centre, Accra, where we lived. Then the boating and swimming began and the action was on in the Tema Harbour, built by the contractor Parkinson Howard, same company that laid the concreted Accra-Tema Motorway. It was the middle harbour that was not yet open to traffic that had the best water -- clean and pristine with fresh quarry rocks and lots of jelly fish. I was able to do a fair doggy paddle and was

comfortable with a gentle, life saving breaststroke. We would line up and dive off the rocks and Leo, the most daring of us, had obviously taken after Beattie. We had found out from a book prize that back in school in Dulwich College, England, Beattie had been a champion diver and swimmer. He was a modest man and had never bragged about his achievements all these years.

Early Achimota Years

The pool in Achimota was very small, 25yds and 6ft at the deepest end, needless to say in the past there had been a fatal diving accident and all the boards had long been removed. The maintenance man, Amega, was a muscular type, fondly remembered especially by Amoasa Torto, clad in his standard issue calico Achimota swim trunks, and rather cheerful. He kept the pool in good shape but very often, over chlorinated! He wasn't taking chances with 950 students and the public visitors passing through each week. Back then all sports at Achimota were compulsory except for those that had medical exemption. The Inter-House competition was during the 3rd term before the long vacation holidays. The pool was open to the public twice a week and Sundays were for all. During the week each House had a 45-minute slot.

Some of my friends and senior students were swimming competitively already; especially, those whose parents worked and lived in Legon and virtually lived in the Achimota pool all their youth, Kofi Christian, Nii Ofrang Jones-Quartey. Others were expats. -- Mahoney, Lithcott, Shumann. And then there were the half-castes -- Larry Kojo Lee, McCarthy, Newlands, John and Gerald Annan-Forsen. But overall, with respect to the school population, there were so few above average swimmers. There was no formal instructor and no school team because not a single other school had a pool except Akosombo. Going to the pool was for leisure and there was always a master on duty to merely supervise. One of these was Guy Coates, a young Brit who was an ace motorcycle rider and he also began a swim class and taught life saving skills.

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I was a resident of Lugard House and the other houses that caught my swimming attention were McCarthy, Cadbury and Guggisberg; and the tradition seemed to continue for the 7 years I was there. We used to tease the Guggisberg boys about being so close to the pool and should always have been first in competitions. And in all the 7 years at Achimota, I remember the pool being shut down only once when we had a terrible water shortage and had to conserve for many days, it was a giant water reservoir and sustained us until Ghana Water Company sorted themselves out. Great credit has to be given to Alan Rudwick, the Headmaster, for his emergency measures and management and I remember he was bent on

not having the school closed down. He dammed the large gutter just outside the school main gate and that water we fetched by bucket for watering the gardens and flushing our toilets, the squatters. It was a learning experience for us as well and I remember using a bucket of water for four wash downs.

Rudwick kept the maintenance staff on their toes and the lovely brass piston pump at the pool house was always in top condition. I used to spend at least half an hour marveling at it each time I was around there.

By Form 2, I had picked up on my swimming but was still only doing the breaststroke; however, I was good enough though very small in size, to lineup for Lugard House. I won the race and sadly the seniors had only 2 lined up for their race out of the 7 houses. I was asked to lineup with them as a fill in. Swimming for Gyamfi House was Ayitevie and just before the whistle for the start, he gave me a stern warning. That race, I had to pull back and pretend I was exhausted, and cruise in to second place. The bullying at the time was serious business. Larry Kojo Lee was great to see in the water and he had the body for speed, always reminded me of Kofi Christian, slim from head to feet but not so broad shouldered. Larry had set the mark in backstroke and held the records over 25 and 50yds. The other great record was from a senior -- Prefect Tawiah, dark and built like a Tuna fish, and it was the 25yd freestyle sprint, 11.9 secs and this stood for many years. His great rival was Konu of Guggisberg House. Another prominent feature was the long distance record of 100 lengths, 2,500yds set by Newlands, McCarthy House, on one Saturday morning. Newlands was a great all round swimmer and he, after Tawiah left, was the top sprinter at 13 secs over 25yds. McCarthy House also had Nii Kwartei Jones-Quartey, another good sprint swimmer and between the two, kept the house in the top ratings during their time.



Fig.3: Pinnock Casely-Hayford at the Accra Zoo, 1969

Mid Achimota Years

Mr. John Derek Holt, School and Senior House Master of Lugard House, was very keen on our improving the standard in the water. He and Mr. Adrian Sherwood of Cadbury House were rivals in all house competitions from singing and gardening to swimming. We began to lay the foundation for a better team and by now had fairly strong swimmers in the house team -- Kingsley Orracca-Tetteh, Humphrey Gbeho,

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Kofi Christian, Sami Bentil and I. Behind us in the lower forms were Desmond Crabbe, Emmanuel Odai, and Phillip B. Aboagye.

Guggisberg House had Nii Odoi Oddoye, freestyle and backstroke; Justice Boakye, breaststroke; and Senior Adu, brother of Steve ‘Pata’ Adu, who was to pass on so tragically one summer vacation in Germany while swimming in a lake. Aggrey House had Houston Mitchell, sprint champ and son of our beloved Art Tutor, Mr. Mitchell; but Cadbury House had the best spread, with Nii Ofrang, and young Ivor Heward-Mills and his senior brother Rodney. Bernard. N. Sackey who also in Cadbury was the plunge king and a few years earlier when I was in Form One they also had Shumann, the German.

With encouragement from Derek Holt and inspiration from Lugard House members, we began to train in the mornings and improve our skills and stamina. Sax Somuah was the greatest influence on the Swim team though he was not a swimmer and could not even float. He bound us together and we blended with the Track and Field team, sharing training and body building. He was very detailed and aware of team spirit, moral and appearance. We even had the same swim trunks, red and white stripes, we called ‘Zebra’ and he shopped and paid for them with his own money. By early Form 3, I had taken up backstroke competitively primarily since we had no one else for it and I surprised myself at it.

1967 had been a good year for Lugard but ‘68 was greater. Humphrey smashed the 100yd record and we had all the relay records for both juniors and seniors. In addition, I had the marks in both strokes at all distances and was a leading contender in the sprints. It is rare for a breastroker to be a fast backroker and also a freestyler. One particular competition, I competed in the plunge and the poolside dive as well. Kofi Christian always won that event till he left the school in ‘70; he was simply graceful and fluid at it.

Senior Achimota Years



Fig.4: 1969 -- Achimota School Sports Team arrives at Kings College, Lagos, Nigeria

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Mr. Hansen-Nortey was a good sports-master and his entry into Achimota with Mr. Osei-Antwi boosted our sports levels tremendously. They were also timely introduced to help prepare us for our Nigerian rivals from Kings College; again with Rudwick firmly at the helm, this was not surprising. The ‘69 Swim meet in Lagos was a serious eye opener for Achimota. We presented a four-man team, Humphrey Gbeho, Houston Mitchell, Kofi Christian and Pinnock. Their pool was a 33yd one and 8yds is a considerable length to have to ‘make up’ after you have done all your training in a 25yd pool over several years. Stamina was a big issue especially surprisingly for Humphrey and I was sick and not anywhere near my top form. Three of the Kings College swimmers were in the Nigerian National team and during training I watched the Nigerian junior team lapping, they were marvelous and had a foreign ‘white’ coach. Kings College had Fajamisin (?) -



Fig. 5: Achimota School Sports Team at Kings College, 1969 (Photo courtesy of Dr. Kingsley Orracca-Tetteh)

- please pardon me, I am not sure of the spelling -- he was the Nigerian national champ in breaststroke and he was that good! It was a close race I conceded and had to admire his size, condition and live to fight another day. They also had the Aluko brothers who were very strong in the other two strokes. Something we had not prepared for was the Butterfly and Kofi stepped up to it, I was impressed with his style and knew that the following year we would have to practice more for that. Humphrey could barely finish his 100yd race, came in 4/4 and Mitchell came in

third, 3/4, again a sprinter not anywhere cut out for long distance, admirable. We had no nominated team leader and we went along on the understanding that everyone simply knew what to do. It was a loss that I felt so badly about and deep inside me I just knew it was a great wakeup call and we would have to step up our training tremendously.

The trip back to Ghana was a happier one even though we were apprehensive about how the School would receive the results – we had no mobile phones back then! Again we broke the journey and stayed the night at our sister Secondary School, Lycée Béhanzin located in Porto Novo, Benin (then Dahomey, which means ‘Land of Snakes’). They always showed us great hospitality. They served us huge chunks of beef at dinner and we drank cocoa out of little bowls -- French style! The short stay gave us all a chance to practice our French – D. K. Osei, who was voted “Sportsman of the Year” was always on hand when we fumbled.

Mr. Hansen–Nortey was a very personable man and never condescending and he always had very kind words for all of us. That evening after dinner, we sat out in a small group and we four swimmers reminisced. The crowning comment came from Houston Mitchell, ‘This is probably the last time I get to swim with you guys on the same side’, he said. ‘Cos when we get back it is Inter-house and we will be competing as rivals, then come July, I am off to the USA’. The rest of us, all three from Lugard House had a year more together as a trio.

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When we got back, it dawned on me that '68 had been the apogee in my swimming. From the marks I had set and could no longer break, at 15, I knew I had peaked. Also, my zeal was ebbing and the pressure of study was on for the pending O'Level exams. 1970 saw me back in Achimota and Humphrey and Kofi also around.

After the Nigeria games that year, Mr. Rudwick had congratulated us despite our low performance and though trying not to show it, it was evident that for the pride of the school he had further plans. He brought in Mr. Tuckett, a young science tutor from England and on a one-year stint in Ghana. He was assigned to gel us and consolidate the swim team, he had swam for his County back home. Up till this time we just kept up with our casual routine of weekly house swimming but Kofi Christian, Sami Bentil and I, were very active especially on Saturday mornings teaching the Primary school pupils how to swim and I gave more private sessions on Sunday mornings, crowded as the pool was then.

The Turning Point

Tuckett picked us up by January '70 and nominated me captain, Humphrey Gbeho, though senior, was busier getting ready for his Upper Sixth Medical exams, we had a great doctor in the making. We were on home turf now and had the luxury of a full team compliment, not limited by travel space in two medium buses. (In '69 I was also a reserve field hockey player.) I invited Nii Odoi and Justice Boakye from Guggisberg House on board with Ivor Heward-Mills and Nii Ofrang Jones-Quartey of Cadbury. Tuckett was in the water often with us and pushed us to the limit. He was a smooth swimmer and had tremendous stamina, made us feel we had far to go. The games approached and we were camped in school with the students that were part of the then upcoming Gilbert and Sullivan opera -- “Pirates of Penzance” performance for several weeks. This was great management and good for the logistics.

The training was intense -- jogging early morning; in the water two hours; breakfast, then in the water again another three hours; lunch, dinner, then in the water again two hours; then sleep at last!. We were toned and our stamina levels were way up, morale was also very high. Nii Odoi had improved tremendously in the freestyle and backstroke, Justice was an okay breaststroker, never wanting to over-exert himself, but he was vital because that stroke had no one else but I. Being an all-rounder in swimming is rare and breaststrokers are not usually freestylers. Ivor was way up there by now and he had an uncanny inner will beyond the other sprinters, he was in for the 100yds as well as the 25 and 50yds. Kofi Christian and Nii Odoi would cover for butterfly and Nii Ofrang stuck to the 25yd freestyle and relays. Humphrey we left for only the 100yds long distance. At this stage we were all under 12.5 sec for the 25 yd freestyle and things looked promising, this was a dream team.

We decided to have something very different and asked Tuckett if we could schedule the competition at night under flood lighting? ‘Sure, why not!’ Hansen-Nortey and Osei Antwi took it up and Rudwick endorsed it, he loved the idea!

Drowning Kings College

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It was an electrifying evening and the whole school was down at the pool. Amega had done a great job and the water was just right, the water seemed so serene as the lights bounced off its glassy surface soon to be disturbed by bursts of energy and vengeance of scores about to be settled, from the bitter memory of our last encounter a year before. Charles ‘Jimmy’ Richter-Addo and Henry Annan ‘Gbonyo’ had local drum music going and our ‘Juju’ was being unleashed through the harmony of almost 1,000 gathered there. Tuckett was cool and Mr. Ofei-Aboagye, Lugard House master, was one of our biggest fans, nervous and more anxious than all the swimmers put together.

Swimming in Achimota then, always began with the 25yd freestyle dash and soon after the opening formalities, Nii Ofrang and Kofi Christian lined up with the Aluko brothers -- the cream of Nigeria. The gun went off and Nii Ofrang, whom I nicknamed the ‘Barracuda’, was like lightning, the first race was ours and there was more to come. Aluko 1 took the 50yds freestyle, a little consolation for them. The thing about just two team races is if you have one good swimmer win and the other merely cruises to a 4th place, the points even out. I was very relaxed that evening and the pressure was off me in the freestyle sprints as we had others to take up. Aluko 2 was their Breaststroke star and he and I had an issue to settle. He had been ‘running his mouth’ before the competition and figured after Lagos ’69 I had gone downhill. It wasn’t even close, I was truly in my element and after the race, and he began to complain about not being used to floodlights and that the 25yds was too short and that the story would be different in the 50yds. What on earth one needed more lighting for in Breaststroke beats me. It was at the end of this race as I climbed out of the water at the deep end that a familiar face caught my attention. It was Beattie, my Dad, and he was with Ernie my youngest brother about to enter Achimota the coming September. ‘My, my, this is a far cry from the little crying boy on the beach in Chorkor!’ I had not extended any invitations but Ernie had found out, remembered the date and pulled Beattie to the poolside that night. It must have been a cherished moment for him that evening and I felt an extra rush to perform and crown his expectations. One thing I knew though was Aluko 1 and 2 were in deep trouble in the following races with me, Rudwick, Mrs. Faustina Hyde (my English Language and Literature teacher), Tuckett, Hanson-Nortey, Osei Antwi, Ofei-Aboagye and Beattie with little Ernie all looking on!

And I thought I had peaked! A joke!!! I broke two of my old records that evening and we set fresh marks in all the relays, the competition from the Nigerians was healthy and they pushed us to our limits. Ivor was emerging fast and performed well in the 100yds breaking the school record of Humphrey Gbeho. Nii Odoi used a flip for the first time, at the turn during the 50yd backstroke, it was lovely to see though I never used that technique, and still won. I knew he would go far in the coming years. The greatest credit should go to Tuckett for his coaching and handling of us, we ended the evening with lots more left in our tanks. Lagos 1969 had been avenged in grand style.

Ebbing Spirit

My zeal was all but gone by Upper Sixth and it was Nii Okai ‘Lenny’ Evans-Anfom whom I had grown close to, kept me just a wee bit competitive. Sax had left over a year ago and Tuckett had spent just a year with us. Kofi Christian and Humphrey were also gone and it was just Sami and I in the Lugard team. Funny that

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for the first time we had better juniors than seniors, for some reason we had awakened something in them. I simply did not feel like swimming anymore and prayed that we would not have to go to Nigeria again. But as sure as hell, Rudwick had it on and we were assigned a new coach, Yeboah, for swimming. Yeboah was abrasive, dogmatic and a non-swimmer -- for me a non starter from the get go and a total anti climax. I also had serious pressure of school work and was not enjoying the course I was in so it all weighed heavily on me.

In Nigeria that year, I had a muscle pull in the very first race, though I won narrowly and instead of nursing it, the coach began to berate and chide me. As usual there were only four of us and no replacement for the next race, 66yd Breast-stroke. The hosts got impatient as I had overused injury time and they lined up and swam without us. I had an 8mm camera on this trip and Ivor was filming. It was at this stage that totally disgusted, Ivor gave the rallying cry and Achimota rioted, bringing the games to a halt. We were recalled and to the best of my knowledge, that was the last with Nigeria and Kings College.

Upon our return, I was called in by Rudwick and quizzed, he was very factual and understood I was merely injured and though he was all for school and tradition, etc., he underestimated the support the teammates had for one of their own. I was sad about it but it was all not gelling anyway and there comes a time in life to let it all go, something big was missing in '71 and we never had the right pill for it.

The best news after our return, as we all swam loosely for the Inter-House competition, was that of Ivor Heward-Mills breaking the long standing 25yd sprint record, set years back by Prefect Tawiah when I was in Form One. Ivor took it down from 11.9 to 11.2secs. It was the last of the untouched records and we finally had it in our bag. Incidentally, if my memory is right, Ivor’s Mum, Auntie Pauline was a good swimmer in her day and the genes seem to have run strong. Ivor’s younger sister Denise ('74) was also a top swimmer at Achimota.

The Last Inter-House Meet

Nii Okai and Nii Odoi of Guggisberg House were in the same Lower Sixth class and there was a lot of bragging going on that Nii Okai would relay back to me. Nii Odoi had his eyes set on being the ‘King of the Water’ and I seemed to be in his way. That year’s Inter-House competition was to be my last in the school and quite frankly nothing about swimming mattered much to me. I kept up with the Primary pupil coaching and spent a lot more time with Boys Scouts and Red Cross activities, School for the Blind, and playing guitar for the kids at the Korle-Bu Children’s wards. Nii Okai eventually said to me he had betted quite a few provisions (food) on the pending swim competition with Nii Odoi and the focus was on the backstroke which he reckoned he was best in. I told Nii Okai to cancel as he was going to lose it all, I had no will to push myself beyond the performance of the previous year. Then he added that Nii Odoi was saying that he was going to win and he would finish each race far enough ahead of me to get out and give me a hand out of the water, and set a new mark at that. I reckoned that for a comment like that, he must be good and had probably been timing his attempts during training. Today, I think back and smile and wonder what the hell swirled up in me to get my adrenalin pumping once more. We had no team to boast of, -- Cadbury had Ivor and Nii Ofrang -- so was this to be Guggisberg’s year?

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Fig. 6: Pinnock Casely-Hayford with Richard A. Tetteh (“RA”), Marian Obeng & Muriel Opoku-Acheampong at RA’s University of Ghana room, circa 1970.

As usual, I had to do nearly all the strokes and Nii Odoi narrowly won the 25yd freestyle sprint, though I had been a fraction ahead and ran into a side rail at the very end, this more than elated him but he knew that was not my major and the backstroke was what he had his eye on. I never knew I still had that much in me and after my victory in the 25yd backstroke, I just knew I would give the 50yd my best and concede if need be. We got off and were very matched as we headed for the turn. In Backstroke you usually can only see towards your legs and not your side so it is difficult to judge competition from an adjacent lane. My technique at backstroke is to burst and propel and keep increasing speed and not worry about stamina, during all my years

of training, I had practiced for a faster 2nd leg. At the turn I had him in my sights and knew I was ahead of him and turning first, all I remember saying was, ‘Today, you are mine and always will be, see ya!’. I had a smile for him at the end! It was a sweet victory and not a word needed to be said between us afterwards.

Cadbury and Lugard were neck and neck in points with Guggisberg a close third; and it came down to the last relay 50yds x 4 freestyle. The lineup for the final lap was simply impressive, Nii Ofrang for Cadbury, Nii Odoi for Guggisberg and Pinnock for Lugard. We had no strong swimmers and though I had originally arranged to swim the 3rd leg, I rearranged for fear that Sami Bentil or P. B. Aboagye would lose any piled up lead to the ‘Barracuda’ or Nii Odoi, plus secretly, I had a score to settle for the narrow 25yd sprint loss. I really missed Kofi Christian that day -- when there is pressure he is so cool.

The end of the 3rd leg saw us behind Guggisberg and ahead of Cadbury -- I was sandwiched between a rock and a hard place. I concentrated on Nii Odoi with a vengeance, Nii Ofrang I knew had stamina problems at the 50yd distance and at best I could hold him off, Oddoye had it all plus more. He was about a third length off when I left the block and I swam like a crazed fish. We hit the end almost simultaneously and I knew I had him, I went all out and Lugard carried the relay with about 2m to spare, my mates carried me shoulder high and into the changing room, it was the crowning race of my swimming career and a clear indication that I was the king freestyler as well. My final year in the water is obviously dedicated to Nii Okai Evans-Anfom and the ‘betted’ can of corned beef we celebrated with that evening.

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Post Achimota

I was to bump into Coach Yeboah again in about '73 when they organized a swim meet at the Riviera Beach Hotel's 50m Pool, to select a team for Ghana. I entered and easily won the 100m breaststroke but was never called up, does anybody wonder why?



Fig. 7: Pinnock Casely-Hayford, 1978

Nii Odoi I met in the pool at KNUST as they prepared for the Inter-Varsity games and of all people, the Nigerian 'Fajamisin', and Humphrey Gbeho were also participating. Emmanuel Odai, one of our juniors in Lugard House, Achimota, had also come up to a high standard and I believe he and Ivor Heward-Mills were the top freestylers on the KNUST campus. I was non-residential and did not stay to watch any of the events that evening.

However, Ivor recalls having a thrilling competition with Emmanuel in the 100 metre race that year. Emmanuel, who had never before beaten Ivor in a swim race, set the fastest time in the heats and was determined to beat Ivor for the first time in the finals. Ivor was a bit worried as he felt he had not really trained properly for the event. Emmanuel had a great start and had a good lead on the 50 metre turn. Ivor knew the 2nd length would be tough but he managed to hold off Emmanuel who was bearing down fast on him in the last few metres of the race. Ivor was glad to finish the race just ahead of Emmanuel and that was Ivor's last ever competitive race.

Ivor had previously won the championship title for the 100 metres at the national level at the Riviera Beach Hotel pool in 1972. That victory earned him a place on the Ghana national team at the All Africa Games in Lagos in 1973.

I must thank all for the fun, encouragement, life-long friendships, advice, coaching, management, and hours of joy we had in the water and most of all for the fierce competition and challenges that brought the best out of us all. And to the late Alan Rudwick who kept all systems going so well that in the 7 years at Achimota we had only one notable shut down of the pool due to an extreme, almost untenable situation. This gave us the smoothest unbroken era of development of the sport both for Achimota and at West African level. Hopefully an effort will be made to restore the Achimota swimming pool for current and future generations.

All Said and Done

After this period, I grew to resent pools, they brought back too many memories of pressures of preparing and waiting for the gun to go off, preferring the tranquility of a virgin beach usually out of Accra in the Central and Western Regions. The excelling, discipline and stamina in the water was to prove rather

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beneficial in the years to come as I was to save quite a few people from drowning. The last was my daughter’s friend in the Rockville, USA at an apartment pool. The life guard was engrossed in a magazine and was oblivious to the poor girl’s plight and the yell of my daughter for help. I was in that water before the gun went! Guy Coates came to mind and bless him for those vital lessons and the eagle eye warnings of Beattie. The lifeguard was not even apologetic and I scolded her mildly, I could have had her dismissed, plus this was a dear friend’s daughter in my care. She said back to me afterwards, ‘Geez, you can really swim!’ If only she knew, I thought to myself.



Fig. 8: Beattie Casely-Hayford with his grandson, Ebo

My most tranquil swimming years were with Beattie and my two kids, on every available weekend and holiday. I was blessed to have the chance of spending the last 6 years of his life closely with him. At the beach we would go beyond the waves and float on our backs for hours chatting and I never forget his quiet warnings about not over extending ourselves and being careful of under currents whilst watching the drift. And lying in the shade of the coconut trees puts one in a different world, a far cry from the rope strung lanes, chlorinated pool, and we all lined up waiting for the gun to go.

Today, as an engineer, I work on lots of machines and water projects and my love, respect and understanding of it gives me an edge in solving the numerous attendant problems especially when water is ‘En Masse’.

Addendum

In June/July this year, 2010, Beattie’s younger sister Desiree visited with her daughter Pauline, our cousin, from Australia where she has been living since the late ‘50’s. We reminisced about Beattie and she told a story he never narrated to us. During the Second World War about 1940, Grandma had gone to England to bring them back home to the Gold Coast and their ship, a troop carrier, had been torpedoed in half -- just off the coast of Sierra Leone. Desiree and baby Louis were cut off and stranded on one half and it was going down pretty fast. Beattie dived in and swam across twice to bring them both to safety.

So much for the modesty, nobility, skill and big heart of a man I have the constant joy of calling my Dad.

“The Swimming Years” – A Son’s Loving Tribute to His Father!

By Akora Pinnock Casely-Hayford
Achimota School, Class of 1969

September 2010

Written by: Pinnock Casely-Hayford, Class of 1969, Lugard House



Fig. 9: Beattie & Louis Casely-Hayford

With input from: Edwyn Amoasa Torto, Class of 1969, Lugard House; Nii Odoi Oddoye, Class of 1970, Guggisberg House; and Ivor Heward-Mills, Class of 1972, Cadbury House.

About the Author: Pinnock Casely-Hayford is an engineer involved with water systems and other projects in Ghana. He is the third son of Mr. Beattie Casely-Hayford, the former Director of the Arts Centre in Accra, Ghana. Under Beattie’s direction, the Arts flourished in Ghana and the Art’s Centre hosted musical concerts, plays, and other events. Beattie’s father, Mr. Archie Casely-Hayford, was a lawyer and Minister in Ghana’s First Republic. Beattie’s grandfather is Joseph Ephraim Casely-Hayford, the famous Gold Coast journalist, author, lawyer, educator, politician and Pan Africanist. J. E. Casely-Hayford is one of the founders of Mfantsipim, a prestigious boys senior secondary school located in Cape Coast, Ghana. He was also a member of the Achimota Council and served on the Gold Coast Board of Education.



Fig 10. Pinnock performing at the Baha'i Jubilee celebration

Read more:

Achimota School:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achimota_School

J. E. Casely-Hayford:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._E._Casely_Hayford

Archie Casely-Hayford:

<http://www.ghanaculture.gov.gh/index1.php?linkid=65&archi veid=579&page=1&adate=14/04/2007>

Beattie Casely-Hayford:

<http://www.libertyhall.com/stamp/Ghana.html>