

The Biography of Romalia Smith

Anegada

Mrs. Romalia Ophelia Wheatley (Smith) was born in Anegada and is the 6th child of the late Leroy and Henrietta Wheatley. She grew up on Anegada and did all the things that most children of those times did: fishing, farming, played 'dolly house' outdoors, attended church and Sunday school. She attended the Methodist Church as her mother was a member there and went to the Anegada Methodist School which was the only school on the island. She started school a year early as the head teacher thought she was smart enough to do so. During those days, the school on the island only went up to 7th grade and when she took the BVI 7th Grade Test she came first in the Territory. She always wanted to become either a teacher or a nurse. Her path ultimately led her to nursing.

Mrs. Romalia Smith is the quintessential community service-minded, altruistic and devoted individual, a true role model for the youth and person deserving of recognition and thanks.

Mrs. Smith lives on Anegada and is married to Mr. George Smith. Together they have seven children, seventeen grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

Among her worldly treasures after all of these years, she still has her Coronation Cup from the 1953 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, a reward for excellent school work and punctuality at school. In her youth she formed the 1st Youth Group on Anegada, the 1st Sports Group and organised the 1st Children's Summer Programme. She organizes, even to this day, annual Christmas parties for the children on the island. She has also organized 'clean-up' campaigns and even when a group is not around, she has found herself picking up trash along the roadside and around the recreation field in an effort to help keep her environment clean.

Mrs. Romalia Smith, throughout the years has been given honours and awards for various acts of kindness and service to the people in her community, too numerous to mention all. Mrs. Smith has two awards from the BVI Health Services Authority, two from the Mount Carmel Baptist Church and another two from the BVI Community College. She also was awarded twice and given the 'Mother of the Year' certificate from the Anegada Progressive League, a Benevolent Association of Anegadians in New York.

Additionally, in 2003, Mrs. Romalia Smith was given the BVICCHA Humanitarian Award and in 2010 attended a ceremony at the Governor's House where she was one of the four recipients to get a Badge of Honour from His Excellency the Governor, Mr. David Peary. In 2012, she received an N.D.P. Contribution to the development of the Virgin Islands award, and in 2014 she was awarded for her commitment to the Youth Ministry in the Methodist Church B.V.I. Circuit. Additionally, in 2015 she was recognized by the MCCA Women's Commission for faithful and dedicated service to Christ and His Church and in 2016 by the Zion Hill Methodist Church's senior choir for her valuable contributions to the BVI. Over the years, Mrs. Romalia Smith has represented the BVI Red Cross, Solid Waste Department and Social Development. She volunteered her time at the Claudia Creque Educational Centre doing after-school reading classes and has also served as Chairman of the Fundraising Committee for the

school. Other Committees of which she was a part of include: The Education Advisory Committee, Library Services, The Museum Committee and the Community College Board.

Mrs. Romalia Smith has been recognised for many things but her dedication and service to the medical field is the most memorable of all. She started off by taking a correspondence course in nursing while doing a little first aid for family and friends who needed assistance in Anegada. She also observed the work of two old-time "Granny" midwives and learned quite a bit from them, not knowing at that time that she'd use the skills of their trade to one day work alone doing the same thing. She then went to Tortola and did some additional training at Peebles Hospital which was then called "Cottage Hospital". It was from there that she returned to Anegada and was the District nurse for 26 years. She worked in the clinic and also did house calls whenever she received a call for medical help. She was responsible for distributing medications prescribed for various ailments and when certain medications were not available she was knowledgeable and experienced enough to advise which natural remedies would work. Parents also took their children to her for their required immunizations.

Currently, Mrs. Smith is retired but is still called upon occasionally by residents or even nurses that are stationed on the island to assist or to answer medically-related queries. She is still very instrumental in the Methodist Church and the Steel Pan Youth band she began years ago is still active. She is in the process of organising another of her Children's Christmas parties and currently works part-time at the Theodolph Faulkner Museum in the Settlement, Anegada.