Dr. Salem Abdul-Khaleq

12.09.1930-22.07.2014

With great sadness Dr. Salem Abdul Khaleq died in London on the 22nd of July, 2014.

Dr. Salem Abdul-Khaleq was known for his academic brilliance as a secondary school student in Crater. He distinguished himself by passing with distinction the then difficult Senior Cambridge Certificate from the Aden Secondary School. His friends and colleagues at school were Mohammad Abdul-Qader Muheirez and Ja’affar Ali Aziz, both of whom became well-respected doctors, and he was some three years ahead of his friend Mr Abdulla Abdulmajid al-Asnag with whom he linked later in labour political activity.

He trained initially as a Trainee Nurse in Crater’s Civil Hospital and with his close friends and colleagues Muheirez and Aziz and senior Adeni pioneer in nursing Mr Muhsin Shaibani. He, Muheirez and Aziz obtained scholarships to study medicine and left for the United Kingdom. There, they shone brilliantly in their studies. Soon after qualifying all returned to work as highly respected physicians in the Queen Elizabeth II in Khor Maksar. Here, Salem became well known for his immense generosity especially to his patients who were not of good income to whom he donated much of his time and financial support.

His interest in psychiatric medicine soon became obvious and he returned to UK to specialise in this field, perhaps becoming the first Arab psychiatrist to qualify in the specialty in the Arabian Peninsula.

During his work in Aden he became involved in political activity. He and his close friend Dr. Muheirez were significant figures in the movement for liberation from colonial rule. Their thoughts, intellectual input and union activism helped in shaping Aden Trade Union Congress (ATUC) and the People’s socialist Party (PSP).

As the war for independence approached its final stages, like many, he migrated to the United Kingdom. Here he found the stability to practice his favourite speciality. He took up the post of Consultant Psychiatrist to Her Majesty’s Prison Service working in the difficult but, according to him, most rewarding vocation. He looked after the prisons around London which catered for some of the most difficult prisoners.
He continued to work in his chosen field until only shortly before his death at an age in the early eighties.

Much a private man but I shall miss his generosity, great loyalty to his friends and their families, his immense sense of humour, zest for life and the never-ending fund of stories and anecdotes. My last abiding image of him was when I last visited him with mutual friends just before the beginning of Ramadan, some three weeks ago. He made us all happy by joining in singing away and tapping the table with his gentle hands in absolute rhythm to Um-Kalthoum’s song and words of Fakarouni; his love for friends and zest for life stayed with him till the very end. He shall be sorely missed.

Rhamahu Allah wa askanahu faseeh janatih

Adel Aulaqi
London