

**Tribute
By
Bradley B Roberts
PLP National Chairman
A Requiem Eucharist Service
Mrs. Florence “Ma Flo” Edden nee Verance SC
1914-2010
The Pro-Cathedral of Christ the King
Freeport Grand Bahama
May 1st 2010**

Salutations ...

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Florence “Ma Flo” Edden that I knew would not want us to feel down cast today. She would want us to be happy and to really have a celebration in her honor today. It was approximately two weeks ago when the Leader of my Party, the Rt. Hon Perry Christie and I were last here on Grand Bahama; we stopped in to pay Ma’ Flo’ a visit. In our own limited way, we attempted to communicate to her how grateful we were for her unwavering service, not just to the Progressive Liberal Party but to her community and her Country. **Believe me members of Smith’s Point, many of the residents of that community just across the way which they call Millionaire’s Row may have their share of money but Smith’s Point because of the matriarchal example of Ma Flo, you have heart and soul! It was Sir Lynden Pindling no less, who once said that what Freeport needed more than anything, was a soul.**

On behalf of our Honorable Leader Perry Gladstone Christie who is unable to attend, the Progressive Liberal Party family, and on behalf of my family I offer our deepest and sincerest condolence to the family of Florence “Ma Flo” Edden, and wish to say to her family, especially her children:

‘Ma Flo’ was given the gifts of long life, strength of character, resolve, an indomitable spirit, wisdom, and leadership which she used to place an indelible imprint on the small community of Smith’s Point and the island of Grand Bahama at large that will endure for future generations. It is noteworthy that Mrs. Edden was the oldest resident of this small quant community called Smith’s Point and was two months away from her 96th

birthday.

I say to her children: Your mother's life must be celebrated as the gold standard for community development, philanthropy, entrepreneurship, civic leadership and the matriarch of Smith's Point. Her enduring qualities will live on through you her children, your heirs and the thousands of people she touched, both locally and internationally and her legacy must not die. It is up to you to accept the baton, carry it with pride and honor, and deliver it safely to the next generation.

Ma Flo's life embodied and personified the legendary quote by former U.S. president John F. Kennedy: "Think **NOT** what your country can do for you, but think what you can do for your country"

She walked the walk with her many professional and civic accomplishments that are known internationally.

Her life also embodied the lyrics of a song made popular by the late Frank Sinatra, "**I did it my way.**" When she was approached by the Grand Bahama Port Authority to sell her property to them, she refused and stood up against the might, power, and great influence of this body and prevailed. As you can see, **Taino Beach** is to the west of Smith's Point and an exclusive upscale suburb sits to the east. It was her indomitable spirit and tenacity that caused her to persevere, sometimes against great odds, and become hugely successful. Given the fact that her loving husband predeceased her in 1968 with ten children to rear, her many accomplishments are all the more remarkable.

Ma Flo's philanthropic spirit and spiritual conviction moved her to donate a sizable portion of her land to the Anglican Diocese for the construction of a church parish.

Her significant contributions to tourism, particularly the development of community tourism at Smith's Point, are well known. She welcomed thousands of visitors to her White Wave Club, and even welcomed them into her home.

Smith's Point has experienced remarkable success in community tourism and is a very popular spot for visitors and locals, still today. My personal favorite is the weekly fish fry that I tried to attend every time I visited Grand Bahama.

The government recognized her contributions to the development of our country and summed it up this way:

"Having contributed significantly to the development of the Grand Bahama tourism brand by warmly welcoming thousands of visitors into

her community and entertaining them by sharing stories about our cultural traditions.

Mrs. Edden was a favourite of numerous visiting travel writers, and repeat visitors over the decades.

"She will be remembered for laying the ground work in Smith's Point for what is internationally recognized as heritage, cultural and community tourism."

You know that you are a national hero, an icon, and a national treasure when the state pauses to pay homage, recognize your accomplishments and contribution to nation building.

During the thirty third anniversary of our Independence, Mrs. Edden was one of fifteen Grand Bahamians identified and recognized as persons who over the years have made meaningful contributions to the Grand Bahama community; those persons who have made a tremendous sacrifice to the process of nation building that has resulted in our fair Bahamaland being able to celebrate 33 years of independence. This was in July of 2006 and she was honored in the area of Hospitality.

In my very humble opinion, her greatest accomplishment and legacy were her humanity and materialism. Her son, Audley Edden, is a living testimony to the manner in which she touched his life and that of so many others.

He describes his dear mother as a teacher, a caring person who loved people, and a community leader.

"When I was 15 years old my father died and so I basically learned everything from Ma Flo," he recalls. "She had an answer for every situation you could be in."

"She taught us the Bible, how to scull the boat, catch crawfish, how to live right and how to care for people and take care of our own family.

"She took care of people from all over the world and there were times when we would say 'Mama you can't just pick up people and put them in your house,' but she was a caring person who enjoyed helping people because she was in the service business," said Audley Edden.

"She was very concerned about the people coming and being entertained and she was a very good Billiard player -- she showed the ladies how to play and beat the guys," he recalled.

Yes my brothers and sisters, the enduring legacy of Florence 'Ma Flo' Edden was indeed her humanity, notwithstanding her professional accomplishments and civic contributions.

She touched and built lives and the Commonwealth of the Bahamas is a

better place because we had the benefit of her presence among us for ninety-five short years.

May her soul, and the souls of all the faithfully departed, rest in peace.