

Daniel Kalinaki Tribute



Kalinaki: The doctor who veered off to journalism

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BY OPIO SAM CALEB

“It was time. I am bored and need new challenges,” Daniel Kalinaki – DK – my former pupil at Kamuli Boys Boarding Primary School (KAMBOS), and now my former General Manager Editorial at Nation Media Group (NMG), broke the news of hanging up his boots and pen at the media house where he began as one of the first writers for *Children's Voice*, later *Rainbow magazine*, before rising to the helm.

DK was no ordinary student. I taught Daniel English Language from Primary Five to Seven between 1989 and 1991. During that time, he served as secretary of the

Debating Club, editor of the Writers Club, pack leader of the Cub Scouts, troop leader of the Scouts, and a member of the Children's Advocacy Council in Kamuli District. He quickly earned recognition as the best poem writer, with his famous piece *Give Us Our Future Now*.

In class, Daniel had a unique style. He never copied notes into his exercise books; instead, he stored them in his head. His memory was razor-sharp, and his talent for poetry unmatched. He was not only the best writer but also the finest reciter, captivating audiences with every performance.

He belonged to the elite Siasa Boy Scouts and Cockroaches School Writers Club, both enjoying special

treatment from the head teacher, the one and only “Our Dad” Patrick Isota.

The youngest of the lot, sharp as a tack, quick on his feet, innovative, and self-driven, DK embodied the Scout motto: “Do Your Best, Be Prepared, and Always on Your Honor.” He lived by these principles, a perfectionist who often outsmarted me, sending pupils to the dreaded Kidofu Corner while he himself stayed clear of trouble.

We shared a life-changing moment at the Scout Jamboree accident on August 9, 1989 when he joined the school from Kampala. Proud survivors, we were ironically admitted to a maternity ward. DK immortalised the experience with the Scout Survivors Poem – “*We Shall Die Scouts*” – and insisted the scars be worn as badges of honour.

He had a knack for spotting my Achilles' heel; my soft spot for Scouts and budding writers. It was an open secret that DK was King Osca's [the acronym of my name Opio Sam Caleb] blue-eyed boy, the school's chief “spy,” and the go-to protec-

tor for boys in need. I too leaned on him, especially when Saturday assemblies demanded a Scout parade, guard of honour, and news bulletin – duties he carried out with military precision.

From Corporal to Sergeant, DK earned his stripes. His columns, *Corporal Afande*, reflected the campfire yarns and pride of our Scout days. He often counselled stubborn boys: “So long as you belong to the King's Club, your mistakes are sorted in the High Command, not Kidofu Corner.” Slowly but surely, he turned rebels into recruits.

As commander of the Red Cub Scouts Sixes, later graduating to the elite Cobra Patrol (closely tied to the head teacher, whose name meant “Snake”), DK led assemblies, public functions, and tours with flair.

“Did you teach Kalinaki? That guy is a genius, a workaholic, incorruptible. I can see the stubbornness, the straight English, and the principles nurtured at Kamuli Boys under Mr Isota. You were real workhorses,” remarked Henry Munaaba Dhikusooka, Director of St Michael International Schools.

DK was the mirror of Kambos. At Busoga College Mwiru, he replicated the school magazine *The Mirror*, echoing his earlier work. At Kambos, he dreamed of becoming a paediatric doctor.

Assigned to cover Kamuli Mid-

wifery School and Mission Hospital, he penned a striking story on premature babies in incubation, titling it: *The Cooked Children at Kamuli Mission Hospital*. He was only in Primary Five, and the nickname “Doctor” stuck.

To this day, we tease him to make the title official with a doctorate. Yet his true calling was writing and reading – his lifelong hobbies.

Daniel drew inspiration from Nelson Mandela, whom he deeply admired. We fondly nicknamed him “Zulu Boy,” and often joked that since he was like a son to me, I named one of my own sons Dan. Today, that son is in Senior Six, following in Daniel's footsteps through the Teso Region Students Media Club. Fittingly, DK himself is said to have named his sons Madi-ba and Mandela.

Ever the diplomat, he once told King Osca, “You need to love your job and invest in it always.”

Last week, as a farewell gift, he handed me a modern phone to help me keep pace with digital media demands.

His honours, mentions in books, and countless gestures are fruits of a life well-lived and remembered.

So, to DK, as you set sail for new horizons, remember our strong principles – Do Your Best, Remain on Your Honour, and *Tokola Kiswaza*. Kambos remains the power that stands tall, head and shoulders above the crowd.