



# The Nigerian Society of Engineers

PORT HARCOURT BRANCH

e-newsletter

2008 / VOLUME 37

website: www.nseph.org

e-mail: info@nseph.org

8TH NOV. 2008

## NSE CELEBRATED HER GOLDEN JUBILEE IN ABUJA RECENTLY. ... ESTABLISHED IN 1958.



### An Interview with Engr. Mrs. Anthonia Olamide Amadi Emina on Women and Engineering Education

**E-Newsletter:** Thank you very much for the privilege you granted us this morning. It will interest our reading audience to know who you are. Can you give us a brief explanation of your life, how you got into the profession, your contributions and experiences in the profession?

**Mrs. Amadi Emina:** Thank you very much for having me at short notice. It is a great honour for me to be here. I am Mrs. Anthonia Olamide Amadi Emina. I read Electrical/ Electronics from the University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University. I graduated in 1984. I must confess, for one to study in this country is not fun, but the desire in you brings success. Before you can read engineering you have to be sure of what you want, or else you can easily be discouraged by what you experience in the university. Because we don't have what it takes to build good engineers but if you have the desire to be what you want to be, that is what pushes you ahead and that's what makes you succeed. As a lady it was a long hard road for me, because as at my own time, the guys were like we were not wanted and so we had to fight ours through every where. In fact it was like we were on our own. They were not ready to help, share knowledge. We were just two girls in my own time. So we had to work almost ten times more to be able to achieve the same fate. And I must confess, working ten times as more of what the guys were doing was genuine but the guys we were trying to beat were not genuine in what they were trying to do. Most of them would copy books to get their practical work done, most of them would cheat. I am not trying to pull them down. Every student then would want to be a least at the same level with them, or you want to be close, you don't want to be left behind, you have to work extra hard. Because all the books they had access to, we didn't have access to them. Once they get into the library, they took all the books. Until final year before they will release the books, that's if you will see them again. And when you graduate, you get to the world, because we were few girls in the profession, when you go for your primary assignment, you are very few ladies and most times, they (men) look at you as might be this one is an easy target. So the challenge is all there every where. As I said, what kept us you going on was the focus. When a woman is in this profession, she must know what she wants. She must have focus, otherwise she can easily be swept off her feet. That is the advantage most men take of us. We are soft and we can easily be convinced into doing other things. This is what made APWEN to be formed. Because we needed to prepare girls for this noble profession, we needed to out lay the fears most girls and boys have for sciences because truly the sciences are not easy. It is something that you got to develop when you were a child. Something that has to be in you as a child, something you love. You got to love the mathematics, physics, biology and chemistry. If you don't



Engr. Mrs. Amadi Emina

love these subjects, you don't have any business in there, else it will be like a struggle and you will not enjoy it. That made Mrs. Maduka, who was the founder of APWEN to encourage the girls. But as time went on, we found out that the boys needed the encouragement too. So we carry the young ones along. Career counseling began, in schools and also to enhance that, we started giving out prices. We had price giving days for the best in sciences or whatever; just to encourage them to stay in the sciences. Most importantly the reason why we were doing this is that engineering is the bed rock of any economy and so, the more the manpower in the profession, the better for our country. That was how we started to encourage boys and girls to out lay their fear and to get them into the profession.

**E-Newsletter:** Thank you very much madam. From the period 1984 to present is a good number of years of experience in the profession. How do you rate our profession in terms of quality and development with other parts of the world?

**Mrs. Amadi Emina:** I am sorry because I might disappoint you. I am not going to rate our profession very well. Maybe I will just rate it, being modest 50%. Why? Because in some areas we have really succeeded and in some areas we have really disappointed a lot of us. I think the reason is because as the profession was growing, we did not give it the seriousness it deserved. The people at the helm of affairs, our senior colleagues did not give it the attention it deserves. They did not penetrate into the government to help the government in the policy formulations that will guide in the implementation of engineering policies and projects. Many things went wrong in the early 80s and 90s. Once the foundation is wrong, the rest will all be wishy washy. My experience could be used. In fact up till 1996, I thought I was in the wrong profession because one, I was poorly paid. Somebody who read computer science was earning almost hundred times of what I was earning as salary as her furniture allowance as at 1991. The salary is so poor, so it does not even encourage you, it demoralizes you, it does not make you have confidence. I am talking about my experience now,

**An Interview with Engr. Mrs. Anthonia Olamide Amadi Emina on Women and Engineering Education**

...contd from pg.1

and am sure a lot of people had this experience. That you can not be paying people this amount of money and expect them to work, how much more expect them not to be fraudulent. This is the beginning of fraud. They wouldn't listen. And of course what happened. Something serious just happened. The person who didn't listen got fired and of course, more fraud started. It has been perpetuated and the person that took the bold step to improve the salary also got fired but the salary has improved. On top of what he started, increment was built upon. But a lot of harm has been done. Fraud is already in the head of people and once that bad habit is formed, it is difficult to overcome. So Over time it was like I was in the wrong profession until 1997-1998 when we were given a dead line that by 2005, we must have a particular electronic system of operation and then things started changing. The pre-paid system came to being and there was liberalization of the Telecom industry. More people came into the industry, more private sectors came into the industry which changed the face of things and start making people be on their toes, put NITEL on their toes, I work for NITEL. You could see by 2002, a lot of thing has taken place, deregulation has taken place and it was getting better by the moment. All private telecoms operators came in and you can see the effect now in the field of telecoms. I believe you can see the effect of NITEL not being properly privatized too. It is not that we couldn't do it. But something somewhere is wrong, which we are not ready to correct and I believe until we correct it things are not going to stabilize. People try to make them understand

*E-Newsletter: Thank you very much madam. Your experience has eventually opened our eye and I do hope and know that our reading audience will benefit from that. For the vision 2020 madam, what role do you think the engineering will play in terms of energy, water resources, and transportation etc because we have succeeded to an extent in telecom? What do you think the engineers will contribute in this direction to achieve vision 2020?*

**Mrs. Amadi Emina:** Engineers have a great role to play. Like I said earlier on engineering is the bed rock of any development and therefore, what the engineers need to do is to go back and learn how to do things rightly. We have ethics of the profession, we should not be ashamed to put into everything we are doing the ethics of the profession. We should put into practice our course of learning. What we have been taught in school, we should desire to do things rightly.. However, the government should also ensure that round pegs are put in round holes.

Engineers should be involved in engineering projects. Engineers should be the ones monitoring engineering projects, not lawyer or linguists, you know what I mean. The right people should be used. We have competent hands, competent engineers. When I say competent, I mean those that are up to the standard. We have a huge human resource in this country and therefore, we should be able to use them because if we don't use them, they will waste away. If you use them in their field of specialization, they will be able to deliver. I am so convinced that we have competent hands who can take this country to that desire goal of vision 2020.

*E-Newsletter: Thank you very much Madam, what do you have to advise the young engineers coming up. They complain of the absence of mentoring, it's not there and we seem to agree with them. There is no mentoring. Our senior colleagues in the profession do not have concerned for the younger ones. What's your opinion on this?*

**Mrs. Amadi Emina:** I don't think that is true because I want to talk from my own point of view. I have quite a lot of engineers working with me. And the problem of the young engineer is that, all he thinks about is money. That is their problem because I have children, I have all boys. And all they think about is money, money, money. And I keep telling them money is not everything. Even the ones working with me, I keep telling them that any money that come easily will get its way our easily too. Do a good job and the money will come and it will also stay with you and you will enjoy it for long. But those ones that will come from cutting corners will disappear like thin air. They need to be more focused. They are too restless and every thing is tending towards where I can get more money. So they are not committed to their jobs. They need to be more committed. I have tried to impact on the ones that are with me; at least I work with some for about nine years now. For a particular group am trying to bring up. Most of them can not write a report. So I have been trying to force them to learn how to write report. They should learn to be responsible for their jobs. You can imagine me, Deputy Director, supervising people and I have a Personal Assistant, I find out that all the job they do for me I have to sit down and vet it all over again. It takes my time, gives me stress. Some of these jobs I should be able to give them to do and be rest assured that they have properly done it. But my job will be at risk. So they need to be more focus, they have to be committed to their jobs, a kind of commitment that will make them to be independent. Commitment and be focused. They should see beyond making money. That is all I can tell them.

*E-Newsletter: Thank you very much madam, we are very grateful.*

**YEAR 2008 ENGINEERING WEEK PROGRAMME, 10TH—16TH NOVEMBER . THEME: CHALLENGES OF URBANIZATION IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF THE ENGINEER**

DAY	ACTIVITY	TIME	VENUE
Monday 10/11/08	Opening Ceremony Keynote Address : <i>Challenges of Urbanization in Rivers State: The Role of The Engineer</i> by Engr. Mayne David West  <i>Strategies For Provision of Sustainable Infrastructural Facilities In Rivers State</i> by Engr (Chief) Dr. M.E. Ephraim, mnse	1000- 1100hrs  1100-1130hrs  1130-1200hrs	NSE-Mini Secretariat
Tuesday 11/11/08	Career in selected Sec. Schools	1000hr to 1400hrs	Various
Wednesday 12/11/08	Charity Visit	1630 – 1800 hrs	Home of the Elderly, Harbour Road, Port Harcourt
Thursday 13/11/08	Technical Visit Lecture Evening <i>Impact of Improved Power Supply For Sustainable Economic Growth In Rivers State</i> by Engr. Mrs Nwaoko fnse  <i>Managing Storm Water In Portharcourt Metropolis: Selected Challenges and Case Studies</i> by Engr. Dangana, mnse		PHCN NSE Secretariat
Friday 14/11/08	<b>Courtesy Call</b> Managing Director, NDDC, PH	1100 to 1300hr	NDDC Secretariat, Aba Road Port Harcourt
Saturday, 15/11/08	Annual Dinner/Induction/Fellowship Celebration	1700 -2030hrs	Atlantic Hall, Hotel Presidential, Port Harcourt
Sunday, 16/11/08	Thanksgiving Service	1000 -1200hrs	St Johns Anglican Church , mile 3 Diobu Port Harcourt