

Ila Goco Groves

Reminisce about the Groves with me (A Poem)

Aweis A. Ali



A 1960 portrait of Merlin Grove and family. Left to right: David, Merlin, Bruce, Dorothy, Pauline. Photo credit: Omar Eby/
A Whisper in a Dry Land

The purpose of this Somali poem is to immortalize the memory of a beloved Mennonite missionary to the Somalis. Merlin paid the ultimate price as a minister of the Gospel. The Groves came to Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1960 with the Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM). They lived in Mahaddaay before moving back to Mogadishu in 1961. The following year, in 1962, a radicalized Muslim man attacked the Groves with a dagger while registering students for English classes. Merlin died on the spot, and

Dorothy sustained stab wounds. Merlin was 33 when he was martyred. Dorothy died in 2010 at the age of 84. The schools the Groves pioneered in southern Somalia produced some of the finest Somali intellectuals and educators. Despite their brief ministry time in Somalia, the Groves left behind an everlasting legacy. Many Somali Muslims came to the Lord in Somalia through the ministry of the EMM. This success was realized during the heydays of their ministry from the 1950s to 1980s.

The following Somali poem (with its English translation) was composed in memory of Merlin Grove. May his witness continue to be a source of strength for the Somali Church.

| Ila Goco Groves | Reminisce about the Groves with me |
|---|--|
| <p>Merlin Guulihiiibaa Ka badnaadshay geeri Isaga gurboodoo Gugu laba u buuxsamin Beerkaa xanuun galay Saddex sano asoon gelin Waxaa jiiray gaari Awowgii Grove waday Markuu galay iskuulkana Kelyihii xanuun gaar</p> <p>Gabagabee dugsigi sare Shil kale ayuu galay Walax uu garaacay Uusan garan waxay tahay Gugac qaraxa daysoo Gacantiisi bidix baa Saddex farood ayaa go'ay Dhakhtar baa la geeyoo Inkastuu dhib badan galay Guullaa badbaadshay</p> <p>Merlin garasho dheerihii Guule yuu jeclaayoo Soomaali gebigeed Guudkuuba saartoo Gibilkiisi sidaan nahay Gaalib noogu yimidoo Guri iyo gesiinba Cilmi gaan ahoo sugan Waxay gacani goyso Gobanimo innoo soor</p> <p>Dorothy-dii gobta ahay Ee gargaarka caafimaad Geyigeena keentay Guulle nala wadaagtay Gaari bay ahaydoo Ilmaheena gaanka ah Gaarrax bay u diiddoo Way wada gargaartay Gaasabbaxeenoo</p> | <p>God protected Merlin before He saved him from death When he was a baby Before he was two He developed empyema Before he turned three Grandpa Grove's car Had run him over In his first grade He had kidney issues</p> <p>After high school He had an accident Strange thing he found He hit it with a hummer It had exploded He lost three fingers In his left hand A doctor treated him Merlin suffered a lot But God protected him</p> <p>Merlin was farsighted He loved God He cherished Somalis And that is all of them Like we were his flesh He ran to us to help Shelter and food Useful knowledge Everything he could He gave us freely</p> <p>Dorothy, the noble lady She brought to Somalia Much needed healthcare She taught us about God She was a super woman Our numerous kids Were not urchins anymore She helped them all They prospered</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Gaarsiisay horumar</i></p> <p><i>Gudcur kuwa ku daaloo</i> <i>Aan Masiixa garanayn</i> <i>Bugto kuwa gabraartoo</i> <i>Waa gibil madoobaad</i> <i>Iyagaa gargaaroo</i> <i>Ganbo aan ka qaadan</i> <i>Gaarsiiyay Injiilka</i> <i>Dawo gaara siiyoo</i> <i>Guudka iyo ruuxaba</i> <i>Guushaas bal eega!</i></p> <p><i>Doqon gaatamaayo</i> <i>Garashadiiba laga xaday</i> <i>Gaalleef af badanbuu</i> <i>Guntigiisa soo geli</i> <i>Soo gabeeyay shaydaan</i> <i>Xerti Guullaheennuu</i> <i>Inuu ruuxa gooyaa</i> <i>Garaadkiisi geliyay</i> <i>Inuu gallad Eebbe</i> <i>Uu ku gaari karaba</i></p> <p><i>Merlin geeriyoodoo</i> <i>Waxaa gaaray Dorothy</i> <i>Golxob dhaawaceedii</i> <i>Dhibka gaaray reerkaas</i> <i>Eebbe uun ayaa garan</i> <i>Rabbow gabanadoodii</i> <i>Faracooda gebigood</i> <i>Gacalkaagi weeyoo</i> <i>Gargaarkaagaa siiyoo</i> <i>Garabkooda noqo uun</i></p> <p><i>Cafis gobanimo ayay</i> <i>Gaarsiisay Dorothy</i> <i>Gabgablihi la sirayee</i> <i>Dhiigooda galay gebi</i> <i>Gacaliyaheedi dilayee</i> <i>Carmalnimada geliyee</i> <i>Agoomeeyay gabanadi</i> <i>Geesinimo dhaba oo</i> <i>Guulle uga timidoo</i> <i>Heerkaa ku gaadhay</i></p> | <p><i>They achieved so much</i></p> <p><i>Those living in the dark</i> <i>Not knowing the Messiah</i> <i>The sickly and the weak</i> <i>Who were visibly ill</i> <i>The Groves helped them</i> <i>And they did it for free</i> <i>They preached the Gospel</i> <i>They healed holistically</i> <i>They distributed medicines</i> <i>Look at that success!</i></p> <p><i>A deluded nincompooop</i> <i>Who was brainwashed</i> <i>He hid in his undergarment</i> <i>A deadly dagger</i> <i>Satan was leading him</i> <i>He thought that killing</i> <i>The disciples of God</i> <i>Would please his god</i> <i>To earn divine blessings</i> <i>He believed in that</i></p> <p><i>Merlin passed away</i> <i>Dorothy was not spared</i> <i>She was stabbed</i> <i>Only God knows</i> <i>The pain of the Groves</i> <i>O Lord, their children</i> <i>All their descendants</i> <i>They are all yours</i> <i>Give them your help</i> <i>Be on their side</i></p> <p><i>Dorothy forgave well</i> <i>The deceived murderer</i> <i>What a forgiveness</i> <i>He shed their blood</i> <i>He killed her husband</i> <i>He made her a widow</i> <i>He orphaned her kids</i> <i>She was strong</i> <i>She was courageous</i> <i>A bravery from God</i></p> |
|---|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Ila goco Groves Dal nabaddu gaan tahay Geed geed u garanoo Gacalkoodu tuban yahay Ka guureen dhammaantiis Gacan qabashadayneey U galeen Banaadir Mahaddaay u guureen Tacliin ay u geeyeen Guullow abaal mari</i></p> <p><i>Omar Eby-na geeddigi Ay galeen Groves Gaarsiintii Injiilkiyo Dugsiyadii gabanadu Tacliiintay guranayeen Goobo caafimaad iyo Wanaaggay gingimayeen Ku guuriyay buuggii Uu ka qoray Groves Gallad baan u haynaa</i></p> | <p><i>Reminisce about the Groves Their country was peaceful A country they knew well Their loved ones were there Yet they moved to Somalia Just to help us They resided in Benadir They lived in Mahaddaay They opened schools O God, reward them</i></p> <p><i>Omar Eby wrote about them Their lives and ministry The Gospel they preached The boarding schools The education they brought The healthcare centers The blessings they shared He recorded them in that book The book about the Groves We are grateful to him</i></p> |
|--|---|

About the author

Aweis A. Ali, PhD, is a missiologist, a poet, and an authority on the persecuted church in the Muslim world with special expertise on the Somali Church. Aweis was a co-pastor of a house church in Mogadishu, Somalia, in mid 1990s when 12 of its 14 members were martyred for their faith.¹ Aweis, an ordained elder, has been ministering in the Muslim world since 1993; he has lived and served in world areas that include the Horn of Africa, East Africa, West Africa and the United States. Aweis earned a B.Th. degree from the Evangelical Theological College in Addis Ababa; an M.Div. degree from Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri; and a PhD from Africa Nazarene University in Nairobi. Aweis' PhD thesis is titled, "Persecution of Christians and its Effect on Church Growth in Somalia." Aweis is the author, editor or translator of 8 books and a dozen articles. He is the founder and the Series Editor of the annual *Maansada Masiixa* (Anthology of Somali Christian Poetry.) Dr. Aweis can be reached at amazingwisdom@gmail.com

¹ The names of the martyred believers from the Medina House-Church are: Liibaan Ibraahim Hassan, Ahmed Ayntow Gobe, Saleban Mohamed Saleban, Isma'el Yusuf Mukhtar, Mohamed Aba Nur, Ali Kusow Mataan, Mohamed Abdullahi Yusuf, Nurani Madey Madka, Khalif Dayah Guled, Bashir Mo'alim Mohamud, Prof. Haji Mohamed Hussein, and Mohamed Sheikdon Jama.