

It was clearly a reversal of dream for a man who had worked throughout his life to become somebody. However, a twist in fate made him a victim of police stray bullet during a night robbery.

The police have denied this, but the family insists that the police cannot claim ignorance of their breadwinner's death, reports **JOHN MAYAKI.**

In the dark, some policemen, led by one Assistant Superintendent (ASP) Emmanuel who went after some armed robbers in the area, allegedly fired several canisters of tear gas perhaps to 'smoke out' the bandits, who had fled just before police arrived the scene.

Though the family has since petitioned the police authorities over what they termed "extrajudicial killing" but life is no longer the same in the hitherto happy family of late Odeh.

Odey's widow, Elizabeth, in tears, told *The Nation*: "The police denied that they shot my husband. We are still on the case in New Benin police station where we reported the case. They claimed it was the armed robbers who shot my husband. We have not buried him. He is still in the mortuary and he was 62 years old."

"They did not come near our house, later residents called in the police and the police began to throw tear gas into our compound and my husband could not resist it any longer because it was too much."

"I feel bad. Only God can take care of my children because I'm not working. I am a full time housewife. Our first son is still in

the University. The second one, a girl, just finished from Igbinedion University, Okada. There is one in 300 level in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. There is one with a diploma from UNIBEN. The last one just finished Secondary School and secured admission into UNIBEN."

Now she has to contend with financing the children's education or have them drop out of school.

Despite the crowd that besieged her house to sympathise with the family, she appeared lonely.

Words of sympathy, however well meaning, were inadequate for her and the children. The hitherto happy home was in convulsion and grief.

Collins, one of the sons of the late Odeh, is a student of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma where he is reading Geography and Regional Planning. He was at home when the armed bandits came.

He also spoke with *The Nation*. He said the incident is a long story but gave a brief account of it.

"I was in my eldest brother's room that night when my sister came to wake me up that armed robbers were around. I was shocked and she said I should hide my phone. We were all inside my mother's room then and we locked the door.

"My uncle was around and my dad was staying in his own room. The next thing was that policemen who came later, released tear gas and my dad came out to wash his face when we heard gunshot."

"The tear gas brought all of us out. Policemen were already around at the gate banging our gate so hard. But we did not open. This was about 5 am. Then they jumped into the compound.

"They came to our passage door here (pointing to the place) and started hitting the door badly. We were asking 'who is that? who is that?' They said they are policemen. We were afraid to open the door because some armed robbers could disguise as policemen such that when we open, they could attack us.

"Later, we opened the door. They asked us to come out in a single file and asked us to raise our



• The late Odeh

hands. They held us by our trousers and were now looking for our father.

"One of them said they heard gunshot here and later again, I heard one saying that someone was shot here. They went into my father's bedroom with my sister. They came to the back of the house where they shot my father and that day, there was no light. So, they pointed their torch and may be, they saw him and did not want to bring him out.

"So, they went back again. Later, they went back with my uncle and my eldest sister. The next thing they were saying was that 'we've shot somebody here, look at the person.' They brought my father out. Then, they came out through the passage door and after, they brought the corpse out and they took him away.

"We were dragging the corpse with them; they said for they will shoot us. They were cocking their guns. They took him away and took him to Central Hospital mortuary. Much later, two of them came and brought the mortuary bill to us to come and pay.

"There is one ASP Emmanuel who used to stay in our street before, he was with them. He was also among the police that came that night. He led them to our house. That fateful day, SARS (Special Anti-Robbery Squad) came and the Assistant Commissioner of Police was also here."

On his emotional trauma following his father's death, he

said: "I feel so bad because it's only my dad that cares for us, nobody to rely on. It's so bad. I don't really know how to cope with my education now because no assistance from anybody."

"We have written a petition to the police that there must be justice in this case. Though they would not agree to the killing but we have hired a lawyer."

The eldest daughter of the deceased, Esosa, is a graduate of Igbinedion University. She said: "My dad struggled to pay my school fees and gave me money whenever I wanted him to. Now, my dad is no more. I don't think there is any hope of sponsoring any of my younger ones again, now that the police have caused this."

"I do not see them as an institution that can protect anybody. They are only destroying the nation. They add to corruption."

The 24-year old graduate of Computer Science added: "We are just confused. We don't have any plan yet. Now that our breadwinner is dead, when it's day break, we eat and we just sit down."

Terris is another sibling. He planned to travel abroad before the death of his father. He hoped his late father would have sponsored him. The Accounting student of the University of Benin said "my dad is the most valuable treasure I have in my life and for him to have died, I don't know what to say now."

40th position