

NEWS **Extra**

Angry robbers gun down shop manager for refusing to part with money

THE sun had shone very brightly on the bright Independence Day, penultimate Wednesday. So, the day looked good for *Papa Sunday*, as he was fondly called in the neighbourhood. But little did he know that, that would be his last on earth.

Papa Sunday left his home, after assuring his wife that he was going to return early from work since it was a holiday. He just wanted to see to it that customers were well attended to during the festive period. It had been a long break and business had been good.

Without wasting time, he hurried out of his house to the shop, a big supermarket on Bode Thomas Street in Surulere, Lagos. The supermarket, Farm Depot Super Mart, is owned by his elder brother; he was the manager of the shop. The place is just about a year-and-a-half old.

On getting to the shop, he was in his elements; he went about his business, supervising the sales clerks and making sure that customers were happy. Everything went well until he was forced to play host to some unwanted visitors.

At exactly 2 o'clock that Wednesday afternoon, six young men rode in a convoy of motorbikes quietly into the street and parked in front of a former NITEL building, opposite the supermarket. Nobody took any special interest in them. Little did they know that these young men were on a special assignment at that point in time: they had come to visit the supermarket.

According to eye witnesses, two of these young men stationed themselves around the street as if they were waiting for a friend. The operation was said to have lasted only minutes. The rest four walked majestically into the shop and demanded for money, holding everybody hostage. There was momentary confusion and everybody ran helter skelter. But *Papa Sunday* decided to act gallant. He started contesting something with the suspected armed robbers. Those who were watching from their hiding places said that they were not too sure. Some said it was the gun the manager was contesting with the suspected robbers; others said he did not want them to get away with the money so he was struggling with them.

Like a hero, *Papa Sunday* held on to the bag, refusing to let go. His show of bravery, (some onlookers said it was foolishness) attracted the attention of passersby and this in-

‘He was dragging something with the men. He followed them outside and he was still dragging with them and then they shot him’

By Evelyn Osagie

furiated the men who angrily shot him on his side and on the back. He fell on his back in pain. They followed with sporadic shots into the air as they made away with the money heading towards Census Bus Stop on the way to Aguda.

By the time *Newsextra* got to the spot, it was difficult to get information from onlookers; everybody was concerned with how to save the manager's life. By this time, a large crowd had gathered. The scene was such a confusing mess. Everybody yelled and hollered about the need to save the little breath in the victim, but everybody dithered. Somehow, help came. "And about 30 minutes after the robbery, while the man was being rushed to the hospital, some policemen were seen shooting into the air; they did not even bother coming to the scene of the crime," lamented an eye witness.

Newsextra spoke to Bruce Ugiomoh, one of those who were around the area when the robbery was going on. He said that he had gone to visit his friend who had a gallery in the area when he saw *Papa Sunday* struggling over something with the men. He said he drove a little further to park his car because some men he claimed were members of the gang had parked in front of his friend's gallery almost opposite the scene of the crime.

"I saw everything the way it happened. He was dragging something with the men. He followed them outside and he was still dragging with them and then they shot him. Immediately after shooting him and collecting the money or

Independence Day tragedy



• The manager being revived after the shooting. He later died on the way to the hospital



• The frontage of the shop. His pool of blood is in the background.

PHOTOS: EVELYN OSAGIE

whatever from the man, they fired shots into the air continuously. I took cover and raised my head fast enough to see that they were riding away in three *Okada* bikes, two of them on each one."

We learnt later that the shop man-

ager died as he was being rushed to the hospital. The supermarket has been temporarily shut down by the owner to mourn the dead. Our reporter visited the place early in the week and met a lady who identified herself as a relation of the

deceased. She parried all the questions posed to her over the death of the manager and the condition of his family afterwards. "He has died, he has died," she said. "What else do you want to know? Please, leave us alone; we're mourning!"