

Lifeline

From CHARLES ADEGBITE, Ado-Ekiti

At 82, you would expect him to be a contented old man, an octogenarian living his life in utmost joy and fulfilment. But for Pa. Gabriel Ojo Adewumi, a retired school principal that had moulded thousands of young lives, that is hardly so.

Since March 30, when a gang of assailants stormed Erijinyan- Ekiti, his homestead, and launched a heavy attack on his family, joy has not been a frequent guest in Pa Adewumi's home. Till now, he is yet to recover from the spate of tragedies meted out to his entire household. Since that fateful date, Hon. Adewumi has been agonising and counting his loss.

His wife, Madam Juliana, a 76-year old community leader and businesswoman, was among the victims of that night's shooting. She died on June 30, three months after 18 bullets were allegedly pumped into her.

Apart from his wife and Ayo Jeje, one of the political associates of his son who also met his untimely death that day, the octogenarian narrowly escaped death in the hands of the murderous gang that came wielding assorted weapons of war. He said the assailants fired several bullets at him, informing, however, that none could penetrate him. In his words, the bullets kept dropping on the table in his front, thanks to the efficacy of his 'Ekiti insurance' – an assortment of amulets and traditional charms with which he fortified himself against such danger. He attributed the effectiveness of the charms to God's grace and mercy.

Narrating his ordeals that night to the reporter, Pa. Adewumi said the uninvited guests, armed to the teeth, came with one mission: to kill and to destroy. His words: "The windows of my house were sprayed with bullets for no reason. There were also two cars belonging to my son's friend, Segun. The two cars were damaged beyond repair. All the glass in the car was shattered. My son, a chief, also had one of his vehicles, a Nissan Armada, destroyed."

But the mother of all calamities was yet to happen. It did when his wife, who he recalled received 18 bullets during the attack, died at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Ido-Ekiti, on June 30. That was after she had spent three months in that hospital. He asserted that his wife, who he described as a very beautiful woman, was so dear to him. He said there had been such deep love between them since they got married in 1959.

"There was no time at all that I regretted marrying her because she always gave me joy and happiness. She gave me good and glorious children. I never had any regrets marrying her."

Pa Adewumi said the man that led the assailants to his house was a chief and a well known political leader in the state. He said the man, whose name is being withheld by us, was the man that fired the shots that killed his wife. He added that after the politician had shot at him severally and noticed that the bullets could not penetrate his body due to the amulets on him, the man left with another member of the gang. The duo, according to the octogenarian, went to meet his wife. He alleged that they emptied 18 bullets into her.

"They came at about 11pm on that Saturday," he recounted. "But before that brutal incident occurred, some men had come here around 2pm that same Saturday to search my house, my son's house as well as my son's hotel. They searched everywhere, claiming that a petition had been written against me and my son that we kept arms and ammunition in the house. When they could not find any weapons, they left. "But later in the night, some men came with guns to attack us. In fact, even at that time, some people were sitting outside. So, they just came suddenly and started shooting sporadically to scare everybody. At the time, I was sitting on this very chair in my sitting room. I also heard the gunshots."

"They later came to the window where I was, and you can see where I am now. I was sitting here, very close to the window, and they started shooting at me. But God protected me and prevented the bullets from entering my body. All the bullets dropped on this table

Tears of an old man

■ 82-year-old retired principal seeks justice over murdered wife, others



•Pa Adewumi

in my front."

He informed that he suddenly heard his wife shouting for help and mentioning the name of the famous politician, saying he was the one shooting at her. The old man said he rushed out to meet his wife through another door. But he said before he could get there, his wife had been shot at severally.

The octogenarian asserted that it was difficult to get help that night as many people in the community had gone to sleep and those that were still awake were gripped with fear. He said he quickly grabbed the woman and, with the assistance of one of his children, gave her some traditional medicinal concoction which suppressed the effects of the bullets.

"While that was going on, one of my children, Gbenga, phoned me. He was very agitated. He said I should come to his rescue, that he was in the house of a chief in the town and that if I didn't come to his aid immediately, he would definitely die. So I quickly took part of the concoction and rushed out to save my son. I got there and took care of him. I met some people there already attending to him, but when I saw him and noticed that his condition was too precarious and that it could lead to death, I immediately ordered a vehicle to convey my wife and my son to the Federal Medical Centre, Ido-Ekiti," he said.

When he remembers the incident – and he does all the time – Pa Adewumi is very bitter. He said it was regrettable "that some politicians who call themselves progressives would turn the state into a political jungle. It is regrettable that politicians would start hunting fellow politicians the way hungry lions would hunt antelopes in the jungle, all because my son wanted to defect from one party to another the following day."

The retired school principal and pensioner

who still engages in some farming to keep himself strong and agile, said he was living in peace with his family until the ugly incident. His late wife, he said, would stay in the hospital from March 30 until her death on June 30.

While narrating how the business woman spent her last moments, Pa Adewumi said she was able to talk before dying. "That day, when I went to visit her, she told me she had not eaten for the past 10 days and the doctor consoled her that she would eat the following day. He explained that it was the surgery performed on her that was responsible for her inability to eat. They were only passing oxygen into her through her nose. Since she was shot and surgery was performed on her, that had been her condition."

Pa Adewumi said when his wife regained consciousness, "she explained to me that when they finished shooting her and she wanted to run inside, they continued shooting at her from outside. My wife was 76 and was until her death the Iyalaje (head of the business women) in Erijinyan-Ekiti. She complained to the police and made verbal statements to the police detectives when they came. The police and State Security Service (SSS) men came from Aramoko, Ado and Abuja and from everywhere. She disclosed that she saw this notable politician (name withheld by us) and some other guys. But she could only recognise the politician and another man. Then they started shooting at her."

He said as a husband, seeing his beloved wife in such a critical stage brought tears to his eyes. "As I'm talking to you now, I'm not all right at all. Those people have really put me in agony; they've put me in a sorrowful state."

He lamented that the last time he saw his wife alive, she complained that N6, 000 was being spent daily to keep her alive. She was in



The late Juliana Adewumi

a private ward in the hospital, out of fear that those that shot at her might return to finish their evil assignment.

"My children, with other kind donors, expended more than N2 million on her and yet she died. This girl sitting beside me is my daughter and a college student. While they were shooting, the bullet penetrated the window frame and hit her on the neck, but with the help of God, the bullet did not penetrate through her neck."

"All the windows of my house were sprayed with bullets for no reason. There were also two cars belonging to my son's friend, and the two cars were terribly destroyed, with all the glasses of the cars broken. They destroyed vehicles and shot at people here. But thank God their bullets did not penetrate their bodies."

So why would the old man and his household become a target? Pa Adewumi said the cause was his son, Segun's political aspirations. He said Segun wanted to contest the House of Assembly election under the platform of the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), noting that he was forced out of the contest. The ticket, Pa Adewumi recalled, was given to another person after Segun had spent millions of naira.

"He accepted the injustice and decided to wait for the promised compensation, either in the form of political appointment or through other means. However, after waiting for almost two years without anything, his followers started complaining that they were being denied their rights after contributing their quota to the success of the party in the last election. When the complaints were given no consideration, they opted to defect to another party. What followed was that my son and some of his supporters were marked down for assassination."

The official defection that had been scheduled for the following day was aborted that night when pandemonium broke out and those that did not die landed in the hospital. But while others recovered, Chief (Mrs) Juliana Adewumi, did not make it back home alive.

"What amazed me most was seeing this politician and party leader holding a very long gun and shooting at me, my wife and my son. It is very absurd. The Yoruba say bi a ban ja, bii ti ka ku ko. It means, that we're quarrelling does not mean we should kill each other. I'm also worried that the person that was arrested for murder over this incident has been granted bail and is walking about free. That is a cause for concern. It is a plan to subvert justice."

"Those in power should remember that they will not be there forever. No condition is permanent. But my wife and others that they killed that night should not die in vain. Justice must prevail in this matter," he said.