

Obioma, Dimgba Igwe's wife: How I've coped for ten years without my husband

YESTERDAY marked ten years that renowned journalist, media entrepreneur, pastor, founding Deputy Managing Director / Deputy Editor in Chief and former Vice Chairman of The Sun Publishing Limited, Dimgba Uguru Igwe, passed on.

Dimgba Igwe was hit by a reckless driver in the early morning of Saturday, September 6, 2014 at the Okota area of Lagos, while doing a routine morning jogging in the area. He didn't survive the accident.

In an interview with *Saturday Sun*, his wife, Mrs Obioma Igwe spoke about her late husband, what she misses about him, his unfulfilled dreams and how the family has been coping without him in the past decade. She spoke with **VINCENT KALU**.

Ten years after the death of your husband, how has it been?

It has been ten years of learning, ten years of understanding and ten years of a new chapter that was opened to me. It has been good, and I must bring in God here. Outside of Him, I don't think you would have seen me here granting an interview.

Dimgba Uguru Igwe's demise has really been a wonderful experience with God; without Him, life wouldn't have been possible. When he passed on, there were expectations, utterances and promises of which the fulfilment was not forthcoming, but our dependence is on God and He has been there for us.

What were the initial feelings you had when it happened on that Saturday morning?

I was there on the spot. It's like, no, it didn't happen; it's not happening. I didn't just see that it was him; that anything like that was happening. Even at the hospital, they told me to go home and I said no, where am I going to? I came with him and I must go with him. It was really a traumatising experience. On that Saturday, to the glory of God, Mr. Femi Adesina was there.

Everybody was there watching me, but one thing that hurt me for some years was that I wasn't allowed to go in with him when they had received him from me. I desired to go in with him, but in the uniqueness of our Nigerian doctors, they will ask if 'you wanted to teach us our job?' People are different, lack of understanding makes things work or not work. I left them because I wasn't going to cause any commotion. Femi Adesina's wife, by the time she came in, went in because she is in the medical line. The matron later came out feeling so bad that Dimgba kept saying, 'please bring in my wife' and they were more interested in making him stable, and it pained her. That was her confession. It is well.

One thing I know is that after it happened, I had to withdraw to ask my Father, the ultimate God, what he wanted me to learn from this. He is the one that gave me peace and I resolved that if He didn't allow it, it would not have happened and at that point I began to surrender.

What do you miss most in him?

I missed the communication, our talks. Whatever he understood and knew, he wanted to impart it. I'm not in your field but he wanted to make me to equally understand the profession. I miss our discussions, our talks, his sense of humour. We laughed, and we shouted and agreed. He was a very family man to the core. He discusses a lot. He wanted to make me a reporter; he wanted me to know what happened in the office. There are a lot of you I know by name, but I have never met because he would tell me this was this; this was this, this was that. We discussed to the point that he would tell me the bottle of water he took - was it turned into glass? Was it remaining? We discussed up to that minutest details about his day. It's like there is no more life here because once he came in, there's life all over as he would want you to know this and that. He spoke very well and he was very articulate. On my own side, there are

• Most promises made to us after Dimgba's death were never fulfilled • Mike Awoyinfa a friend that sticks closer than a brother

words he would pronounce and I would tell him that was not the way it's pronounced. We would laugh. He was a very open person. He would be at the pulpit and say, 'the other day, my wife told me that this word is not pronounced this way but that way.' People would laugh.

When he died, the children were all in school. How have you been coping with their education?

It is the same God. It wasn't easy raising these four children outside of God. It has been God. Why am I bringing in God? It is because at a point when I would begin to cry, He would say, 'why this cry?' Somebody would just step in.

Before he passed on, I had started a business; I was travelling to China to bring in goods. However, after his demise, this business was paying the children's school fees etc because all the promises of 'we will train, we will do this and that' didn't come. That is life and that is the human being for you. There has never been a time the children had to leave school because they didn't pay fees.

He has a very good and wonderful friend in the person of Mike Awoyinfa. In him, I have come to understand the word, 'friendship' practically. When the scripture says, there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother, I have seen it in Mike Awoyinfa. Not just that my husband is gone and we are left alone, no, I don't know when they were building this friendship; nobody knew what would come out of it. I have seen a friend that is more than a brother. Despite the fact that his friend is no more alive, he is still there at any point in time. When I cry, he is there to say, 'no, it shouldn't be.'

How has your Christian faith helped you to navigate through those times?

It is my faith in Christ that has helped me navigate through. There is a Christian song that says: 'I will hang on You, I will hang on You...' When it happened, it's to hang on God because definitely, there will be disappointments from man, because man is human. Naturally, things about life will be presenting themselves to you - loneliness etc. Then I will run to my Bible, which definitely gives me succour. It takes time and it is difficult but that is where the solution comes. Instead of it pushing me far away from God, this incident brought me closer to God. When it happened and I cried, I received answers that comforted me.

Did you, the children or the church have any premonition of his death?

Not at all; not to my knowledge. Whether it was through a dream or revelation, the first step is to cancel it if it is negative by that name of Jesus Christ. You don't begin to brood over. Two days ago, I had a dream, it wasn't a pleasant one and I woke up and used the scripture to cancel it and just let go because if you begin to think about it, it will draw you backwards instead of helping you.

There was nothing strange because he did everything that he used to do. That Saturday, he was to be the lead speaker at a seminar and so he prepared up to 9pm on Friday, before he retired to bed. He was to go for the seminar by 10am, organised by the Igberu community in Lagos. It was just to do his routine exercise and return and then get ready for the seminar, but it didn't come to pass.

Dimgba Igwe had friends in high places. How supportive have they been?

You journalists know a lot of people. I don't know if it is right mentioning names? People like Femi Adesina keep calling and that goes a long way; money is not everything. It shows who he was to some people. It is easy when the person has departed and everything is forgotten. The Bible says; do not put your confidence in man. These ten years, it has been God.



You had some great and memorable moments with him. Which was the most striking?

I'm somebody that is open to learning. With Dimgba around, I learnt a lot of things. There were lots of things he taught me, so, I missed that one. While he was around, I was alive to news. Before the outside people knew it, I would have known. I had that privilege and it was good to me and we analysed it. But now, I don't even care about news. Within these ten years, lots of adjustments have taken place.

In fact, using the past tense 'was' is difficult for me, though he is not physically around here. He was the person I have met and I can say was a child of God to the core. Despite his profession or whatsoever, he stood for the God he served and served Him to the end. That gives me joy that he wasn't a man of double standard. He was very humble and very respectful.

There was always impartation of knowledge on anybody around him. I remember him for that. I'm not a very outspoken person; I'm an introvert. He was an introvert, but with the profession, he could be talking. When he met you he wanted to impart something in you. If you met Dimgba, you would not leave with the knowledge you had; he must impart and add knowledge to what you already had.

Did you ever think of remarriage?

No, my brother. There is no such plan at all. It doesn't even come. Like one of my friends would advise that I should open up to a relationship. I told her, no. That it is a closed chapter. That doesn't come to me at all.

When his eldest sister came and saw the life-size frame picture at the entrance to the sitting room, she stormed out. When she came in, she said: 'Obim, you would have removed this picture so that you come to the reality and

your mind will move away from him; that you should be remembering the bad things he did to you so that you can recover fast because this whole thing is affecting you.' According to her, if I recount the bad things he has done to me, then I would heal faster. I thank God for His grace.

I'm not from Igberu, but I became an Igberu woman by marriage. There were fears originally from my in-laws and it is understandable. To them, I would direct the children to my family's side, forgetting the family and their father's place of birth. After watching, they have realised that it is not so. That is why when people say you are this, be who you are, don't give them the opportunity to confirm, 'yes, we said it.' They have watched, and have seen that I have come and I have come to stay, whether Dimgba is around or not. We are carrying on with his legacy, carrying his name and on what he stood for. Everything about him, his plans we shared.

I just discussed with my children about the things he wanted to do at Igberu, and God willing, we will carry them out. It involves finance; a lot of money. One is that his late eldest brother, Bishop Heaven (He was Igwe and when he went to America, he changed the name to Heaven), he wanted to build a library for his remembrance. He equally intended to build a church parish in memory of his late mother. I shared these to the children that we have to carry out these projects and we all agreed and are waiting for the finance. They have just finished school and just started working, and so they need to stabilise. He has already done the designs of the two projects. Intentionally, I wanted a foundation for him if possible, in which we can use to fulfil all these plans he had. When he passed on, some people gathered and mooted the idea of a foundation, but now it is in the cold.