

Vanguard

I watched gunmen kill my dad

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By Chinenyeh Ozor

NSUKKA — A nine-year-old primary five pupil and daughter of a liquor dealer at Ukehe community in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area of Enugu State, Ukamaka Eze, Monday, gave a heart-rending account of how gun men suspected to be hired assassins, pumped bullets into his father's body at very close range, in their residence. The father died few hours later at a private hospital in the area after hospital authorities bluntly refused to give first aid treatment, insisting on the presentation of a police report.



(<http://www.vanguardngr.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/dad.jpg>) Her account: Narrating the horrible experience to *Crime Alert*, little Ukamaka said her daddy was driving home in a Mazda truck with her after the close of business of the day, and drove straight to their residence and parked. Suddenly, two men alighted from the darkness. She said they forced him out of the truck, took his bag and handset, then fired at him severally. All the while, her father shouted: 'Ukamaka don't come down from the vehicle!'. According to the distraught girl; "the shooting was too much. They pumped several bullets into my father's body before they fled into the darkness."

The slain liquor merchant was identified as Fidelis Eze, 57, (a.k.a Foreign) who hailed from Ohodo community in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area, Enugu state. He was said to have lived for over 19 years in the neighbouring Ukehe community where he was killed by yet-to- be-identified gunmen.

Competitors at war: Investigations revealed that he was the major distributor of a popular beer brand in the locality, and sold up to three trailer loads of the popular liquor in less than two weeks. This, according to sources, might not have gone down well with his competitors in the business in the area. It was alleged that overtures were made to make him switch over to other liquor brands without success. Sources said he was even told to name his price but he rebuffed them, insisting that he has come a long way with the brewers of the popular liquor.

His wife's experience: Mrs Mercy Eze, 36, a non-tutorial staff of community primary school, Umunko, Igbo-Etiti LGA, mother of four children and wife of the slain beer merchant shared her experience in the hands of her husband's assailants on the fateful day of Wednesday October 21, 2015 with *Crime Alert*. She disclosed that her husband, until his death, combined his civil service job as Secretary, Igbo-Etiti Local Education Authority with the liquor business. Her words:

"My husband came back on that fateful day after supplying drinks to different places around 8.30pm. He complained of

being tired and needed to rest and asked me to serve him dinner and lock up the shop so that we can go home for the day. Immediately he walked in, two unknown boys followed him up, demanded to be served beer.

Serving dinner to husband

My husband inquired to know who they were but they declined and said, 'brother, we have come to buy drink'. I then asked my first child to serve them while I served my husband dinner. The two boys took two bottles of the beer and later requested for more.

Soon after, my husband asked me to lock up the shop while he went home with the two little children — Ukamaka and Goodluck. As I was locking the shop, I didn't know how the two boys left the shop because they sat at the dark end outside the shop.

"Then on my way to our residence which was close to our shop, I heard a loud sound of gunshot. I asked my first child whether he heard the gunshot, as both of us started running home. It was on our way that the assailants pointed torch lights at us, and ordered us to stop. They threatened to shoot us if we did. They requested for our phones, bag and every other thing we had.

Immediately, I fell down from the shock of the robbery. Then, one motorcyclist emerged, running while looking at me. I then said to my son that the gunshot was in our house. We braved up to the situation and proceeded to the house only to see my husband on the ground in a pool of his own blood.

I shouted on top of my voice thinking it was a dream. My husband, blood-soaked, was shouting, asking me to call his brothers whose names he continued to mention one after the other.

I rushed to a nearby bush calling neighbours to assist me save his life. When I came back and lifted his shirt, I noticed that he had been shot on the chest and his hands were shattered. There was blood everywhere.

Rejection at the hospital: "As I was shouting, one boy came out to assist me and equally helped to shout for other neighbours to come out. People rushed out and helped to convey him to a clinic at Ogbede. The nurses at the clinic hushed at me and told me to take him back. I pleaded with them to attend to him as I have no phone to reach out to any other place. They asked me to take him to Dr Okolo's clinic. It was there that I met another problem as the nurses there asked me to go and get police extract before they could touch him.

Police intervention: "When I got to the police division at Ogbede, the police after telling series of things said that the area in which we run the business was bad. They, thereafter, followed me to the clinic. On arrival at the clinic, the nurses opened the gate but few seconds later, they asked me out of the clinic on the grounds that my husband has been taken to the theatre for medical attention.

I was told to deposit at least N20,000. I pleaded that there was no cash on me, imploring them to attend to him and that I will bring the money in the morning of the next day but they wouldn't listen to me.

Immediately I stepped out of the gate to ask the driver that brought me to the clinic to loan me the money, they locked the gate behind me compelling me to join the driver back home without knowing the fate of my husband that night.

Neighbours intervene: “The next morning, neighbours came around and could not allow me to go to the clinic, only telling me that my husband has been taken to another hospital in Nsukka for better medication.

It was then it dawned on me that he has passed on but sympathisers kept saying all was well. We live at Amauwelu-Nkpologwu, Ukehe village, the place is always very dark at nights because of lack of electricity in the area.

Lack of electricity

“What my little child, Ukamaka, told me was that her daddy kept telling them not to come out from the truck that the bullet was too much while he swam in pool of his own blood. What I saw was two boys and the cyclist who joined them making them three that attacked my husband but I do not know who they were.

We are aware that people are jealous of our enterprise but nobody has came out openly to challenge the business turn out all these years. Why we believed his killers were hired was that they did not ask for anything outside our phones and keys of the shop in my bag they collected.”

Landlord laments: The landlord to the slain liquor merchant, Ozo Vitalis Nwodo, reacting to the brutal killing of his tenant for over 19 years condemned the wicked killing, saying that those who perfected the killing can never go unpunished if not by the law, certainly, by God, the creator of the universe. He said that he has known Fidelis Eze for the past 23 years even before he came to live in his compound.

Chief Nwodo noted that late Eze came to his compound as a primary school teacher.

“After several years of teaching, he was made the education officer of the local education authority which he combined with the distribution of beer till the time he was gunned down by unknown men, adding that he has never hurt anybody in the village since he lived in the village as he has never complained of any threat by anybody.”

He stressed that the slain Eze maintained a good working relationship with the entire village and that was why people were surprised regarding what might have been the problem to warrant his killing.

“The police should, as a matter of urgency, expedite action by carrying out thorough investigations to bring his killers to book to face wrath of the law for the heinous crime.”

Police spokesman reacts: The Police Public Relation Officer, Enugu State, DSP Ebere Amarizu, said that the state command was yet to be briefed by Igbo-Etiti Division as at the time of filing this report.

“The media would be briefed as soon as the command is aware of details of the killing in Ukehe community,” he stressed.