

## Farewell to a kid brother



The late Elemchukwu Ellah

By Donu Kogbara

MOST folks called him Mike. I called him Chuks, an abbreviation of his middle name, Elemchukwu. We met when he was a toddler. I wasn't much older. Our beloved and distinguished late fathers – Senator Francis Ellah and Ignatius Kogbara – had attended the same Catholic secondary school – Holy Family in Abak, Akwa Ibom State; and Chuks and I wound up kinda following in their footsteps and being sent (as teenagers) to Mayfield Convent for girls and Mayfield College for boys, Catholic boarding schools that were in the same picturesque English village. There weren't many Nigerians in that neck of the woods; and I related to Chuks like a bossy senior sister, regularly summoning him to join me on Saturdays for cakes, tea and discussions about his academic progress at a popular local cafe called April Cottage.

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I need not have worried about his grades. Chuks was born with a very big brain and frequently got excellent results, not just coming top of his class but breaking school records. Our friendship continued into adulthood and included several members of our respective families, plus spouses and in-laws.

I have so many happy memories of partying and arguing about current affairs – in the UK and Port Harcourt – with Chuks and his older brothers, Frank and Patrick (who also went to Mayfield). I used to think of them as the Three Musketeers.

Chuks, who became a lawyer, had a very serious side; but he also possessed a great sense of humour and was a sociable expert arranger of delicious crab peppersoup when we were at home.

He also shared my fondness for Vanity Fair, an artsy-intellectual American magazine. We used to hang out at the Port Harcourt polo club, talking about sophisticated developments on the other side of the world and wishing that Nigeria could fulfil its potential.

As I write, tears are pouring down my face because Chuks left us, on Valentine's Day of all days. He went on a day that is famously dedicated to love. Very fitting for a quintessential gent who was adored by many and lavished affection on his nearest and dearest.

Members of his profession will honour him in a valedictory session that will take place in Port Harcourt's Ceremonial Court this morning.

He will be buried tomorrow in his ancestral home. Let me seize this opportunity to effusively thank Patricia, his wonderful wife, for taking such good care of him during his prolonged illness, which was triggered off by a horse-riding accident.

Patricia's sacrifices and labour of love will never be forgotten. She is a valiant prayer warrior whose unwavering faith kept her and Chuks going through the darkest hours. And I pray that she will find the strength to make the best of the rest of her life without Chuks. On behalf of my mum, Anne, my siblings (Lela, Poage, Dumle), my son Oliver Midgley and the entire Kogbara clan of Bodo City, Ogoniland, I offer deepest condolences to Chuks's heartbroken family: Patricia, her lovely daughters, my darling Auntie Pat (nee Obowu), his amazing mother, the remaining two musketeers and the entire Ellah and Obowu clans of Omoku in Ogbaland, Rivers State.

May their anguish be eased by the passage of time. May Chuks rest in perfect peace in the bosom of Almighty God.