

BIOGRAPHY OF LATE FESTUS SUEKEN EZOMO

Pa. Festus Sueken Ezomo was born on the 26th of January 1922. The name sueken is the shortened from Isueken meaning “*I have laid a foundation*” it was given to him when at his birth; his father overcame the oppression of his half brother who wanted to take all his inheritance from him.

Between 1928 and 1937, he had his elementary education at St. Peter’s Anglican Primary School Okpokhumi Emai and Government school, Auchi. To make ends means, young Isueken taught for three years (1938-1940) at St. Peter’s Primary School, ujeoren- Ekpoma. In 1939 while at Ujeoren – Ekpoma, he was admitted into Kings College, Lagos. All efforts to raise the required school fees for him proved abortive and he had to continue with his teaching appointment.

When it became obvious that money would be a very serious obstacle to his ambition to receive further education, young Isueken joined the West African Frontier Force (WAFF). In 1940 at the outbreak of the Second World War and was posted to Zaria. In the West African Frontier Force, the highest post any African could rise to was sergeant major and Isueken through hard work rose to the post of corporal – just two positions short of the ultimate for an African. He demobilized from the WAFF in 1946 after – the war and came to Lagos in search of a job. In 1947, he was employed as a massager in the colonial government and was attached to federal secretariat. He plunged himself into serious studies through private tuition and within a space of three years, he passed his London matriculation examination in 1950. By 1953 he had passed his senior Cambridge and was subsequently promoted to the senior staff cadre in the colonial civil service. Thus by dint of hard work and rugged determination, he was able to rise within only six years from the post of a massager to a senior staff position. In 1975, he went to the University of Pennsylvania, Pittsburg united state of America for a diploma in public administration. He retired voluntarily in January 1979 as a Principal Executive Officer after 32 years of meritorious service to the federal government of Nigeria. While in government service, he displayed a deep sense of dedication to work. He was transparently honest even to a fault. Even though he worked in customs and other lucrative federal establishments, he never enriched himself at the expense of the nation.

Festus Sueken Ezomo can be described as a self-made man. Through sheer determination, he was able to combine work and private studies to achieve some of his ambitions in life. His love for education knew no bounds. Intact, as far back as in the ‘50s when it was almost a taboo to send female children to school, he had the foresight to ensure that all the female members of his

family went to school. He thus blazed the trail for female education in email community. Today, the family has one of the highest concentrations of educated women in Emai community.

The progress he sought for himself and his family, he extended to his immediate community – Okpokhumi, Emai. Some of his contributions to the progress of Okpokhumi Community for which he will be remembered are:

- In the early '50s the primary school in the village required a quailed headmaster for it to be accredited to present pupils for standard six examinations. It is on record that Pa. FS Ezomo single handedly recruited Mr. Osijo in Lagos as headmaster, accommodated him and paid his salary for a considerable length of time before government took over Mr. Osifjo's responsibility. By this act, many sons and daughters of Okpokhumi who hitherto trekked long distances to attend the few school accredited for standard six were saved great hardship. In order to facilitate communication within the school he provided the school with an internal telephone system.
- Within this period, he paid the school fees of quite a large number of Okpokhumi sons and daughters for their primary and secondary school education.
- For the period he was a recruiting officer in the federal service, he recruited well over fifty (50) Email children into the federal civil service.
- Over the years he has rendered assistance to St. Peter's Anglican Church Okpokhumi by way of buying singing books (H.C.) in English and Yoruba for church services. Since retirement, he has played an active role in the affairs of the church. He was the treasurers of the church between 1989 and 1990. From 1991 until his passing on, he was the acting *Baba – Ijo* of the church. It is on record that while he was the treasurer, he instituted what has been described as the best church accounting system in the Emai district in Owan Archdeaconry.
- On retirement in 1978 and within the space of five years he struggled to ensure that light and water facilities were extended to the village. Today, the village enjoys these facilities through his singular effort.

- By training of his children and members of his extended family, he established a family of highly skilled personnel rendering useful services to the nation and humanity in general. He has left behind a family of Engineers, academicians, bankers, clerks, company directors, computer scientists, etc who are worthy Ambassadors of this village.

These are no means achievements by any stretch of imagination. He was a silent worker. Though he may not have received adequate publication; thanks for his contributions to the community, we believe that in the fullness of time, God in his own way shall give honour to which it is due. He may not have realized all his earthly ambitions but he has certainly left an indelible mark in the sand of time.

Christ is our corner stone, on Him alone we build. We pray that God in infinite mercy will grant his kind of eternal rest. Amen.