

## A TRIBUTE TO MY ELDER BROTHER CAPT (DR) IDAHOSA WELLS OKUNBO (JP)

How do I write a tribute to my brother who always introduced me most times not by my name but by always referring to me as the person he handed over the milk in his mother's breast to.

In my first few years of life, I grew up to know my family. I could only look up to see four people My Dad, Mom, My Eldest Brother DR T(Broda Sunday) and My Immediate Elder Brother(Broda Idahosa). Notice the spelling of brother that I spelt in the native way "Broda" for integrity of respect. That was the reverence I had as a child for my senior brothers its meaning is deeper than the English literal meaning of brother. This was the protocol in the family as they were always there to watch my back and protect me. Of course, by our training you dare not call them by their names just like that without adding the prefix "Broda" to emphasize that they were your seniors.

In 1974, I gained admission to government college Ughelli and my "Broda" Idahosa was at Federal Government College Warri. He would come to check up on me in school and brought money for me just to ensure I was okay. At home during holidays his wardrobe was an extension of mine, and I had a way of always ensuring I tried the best clothes and shoes whenever he wasn't at home until my shoe size got bigger than his own leg. Anyway I made up for it with the "sosticag agbada" I inherited from him in kofoworola street, Off Awolowo Way Ikeja. I recall as I told him during his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration that the biggest amount he ever gave to me in life was ten naira (N10) regardless of what he always gave later in my adult life. Yes, I can proudly say that because unknown to me then he gave that money to me sacrificially from his sick bed when he had an accident in flying school zaria when my school fees for a whole term was thirty naira (N30) which eminently guaranteed me feeding, Accommodation, books and other miscellaneous expenses. So, you can imagine how rich I was as a student.

“Broda” Idahosa growing up always made friends with people far older than him in age and you would begin to wonder what they had in common. His love for flying was hatched in his fraternity with Airforce personnel in the Airforce barracks opposite Today’s Edokpolor secondary school which was just a little distance from the house.

My pranks on him followed him to Lagos when he started flying and he was living in Dopemu. I recall taking off with his Volkswagen Beetle to Naval Base at Apapa when he was asleep from his night stop duties thinking he was not going to work the following day only to wake up and be told that I drove his car away. He then took a cab to work and later I knew that he was more worried for me than for himself because he was not sure whether I could drive.

I can write a book on you my “Broda” but for the fact that tributes are supposed to be brief I would conclude by saying that I am eternally grateful to have known you as a brother. Your love towards me knew no bounds. As kids you corrected me in love, protected me and provided for me sacrificially which is what your DNA is wired for. I wasn’t surprised of your philanthropic spirit in your adult life because that is what I have always known you for. You were only selfish in just one thing, that I always reminded you of, your shoe size which was SIZE 7 as I could not pose with them because of my bigger feet. You came and defined the concept that a tree can make a forest if its trunk and branches are big and wide enough to give support and cover to everyone that sought refuge. I take solace in the fact that you are in a better place, I was by your bed side in the last few minutes before your transition to glory I hate to call it death. I danced with you when you had enough strength to glorify God and sing his praises for the redemption of your soul, you would send your chefs to call me to join you to eat and ensure you dished the food to me personally, how can I forget your last few words to me Otenmwun, Otenmwun, meaning my brother my brother. How I wish I have another opportunity physically to tell you how much I love you unconditionally just as much as you loved me. How I wish I could organize

another beautiful event to celebrate your 70th, 80th, 90th and even 100th centenary birthday with your special dance “capitano step”.

I am richly consoled by the fact that where you are, there is no more pain, no more worries about ephemeral things and the vagaries of life that kept you awake all the time with phone and calculator in your hands. I have dreamt of you few times after your transition to Glory and I can paint a vivid picture of the bliss you are enjoying with the saints. You are heavens gain. Land that plane as you did while on earth with your crew and passengers not noticing touchdown. Please play golf over there, say hello to Dad and Grandma and I hope you are served your favorite meal of bread and stew. Love you my Dear Brother, until we meet to part no more I will keep in remembrance the things you whispered to my ears. You have made me realize that just as we have our calendar, God has his calendar.

Your brother

Kingsley Ehi Okunbo.