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# The Man VOS Olunloyo

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During the Falkland Islands War of the early eighties, the British propaganda machine described their Argentine adversaries as *“a bunch of Italians who speak Spanish, drink French wine and wished they were British”*. The migration and repopulation of South America at the end of Transatlantic Slavery and the European need to make the continent white easily explained the varied origins of the inhabitants of the several countries there. This epithet captures that population mix that ensued.

It is not far-fetched to say a similar thing about the city of Ibadan which grew as a result of the internecine wars that engulfed the Yoruba Country especially in the nineteenth century. Our people have a saying that *“You don’t name a woman ‘Kumolu’ unless there is a good reason for it”*. The fact that our man Olunloyo and other famous family members such as the former Governor both have three initials followed by a reference to *“Oyo”* in the cognomen is also not without a reason. Would they fit into the above model and be describable as a *“bunch of Egba people, who live in Ibadan and wished they were from Oyo”*?

Oral History tells us that the Olunloyos are of Owu extraction where their progenitor Adesina was of royal blood but on the instruction of the oracle had to abdicate and undertake the pilgrimage to Oyo TOWN before he could have an offspring. Hence the name of his son OLUNLOYO (Olu mi ni Oyo) literally *“My Lord of Oyo”* which means *“I was blessed by the Lord in Oyo”*. He thereafter returned to Ago Ika in Abeokuta where he resettled to raise his son to become a famous warlord. In those days if you were a budding warrior you demonstrated your skills and mettle and earned your reputation in the war theatre and that motivated Olunloyo to move to Ibadan the melting port of mercenaries in Yoruba land at the time. He and his men were initially invited to live in Oja Oba but due to skirmishes between his warriors and others, he eventually relocated to Kudeti which remains the headquarters of the Olunloyo family till today. That *“invitation”* may not be unconnected with the fame (or notoriety, if you wish) that the Olowu of Owu and his men had acquired. Consider the fact that after a devastation of Orile-Owu in earlier times, we have the following statement from the records:

*“Olówu sì jáde kúrò ní ilú rẹ̀. Olówu tí ó jáde náà kó àwọn ènìyàn tí ó tẹ̀lé e jọ; wọn kọ̀rì sí ọ̀nà Ìbàdàn. Bí wọn ti n lẹ̀ ni wọn n ja ilú àti àwọn ìletò tí wọn bá dé lógun, tí wọn sì n ba ilú wònyí jẹ̀ gégé bí ìgbẹ̀san fún bíbà tí ogun ba ilú tirẹ̀ náà jẹ̀. Nígbà tí iròyìn dé etígbò Olúbàdàn pé Olówu àti ènìyàn rẹ̀ n bọ̀ wá sí Ìbàdàn, ó sì n ba gbogbo ilú tí ó bá ti kàn lónà jẹ̀,*

*Olúbàdàn yára ránṣẹ sí i pé, òun bá a káàánú púpò fún ohun tí ó bá a náà”*  
[Ogunniran]

That is, “The Owu Chief left his town and went on to Ibadan rampaging the villages and hamlets on his way; By the time Olubadan heard about his behavior, he sent messengers to placate him and ...” He was on his way to Ibadan anyway; Olubadan chose the peaceful way to “invite” the already “self invited” guest so he may come in peacefully. Such “invitations” given to known warlords were pragmatic decisions that often saved growing villages and towns in those days. It had the added advantage that such warlike people added to the battle-ready regiments available to defend your municipality when the next battle ensued.

### **Immediate Family**

His father, the late Horatio Vincent Sowemimo was born on 25th June 1906 and died at the relatively young age of 42. He was reputed to be a very brilliant and multi-talented individual who was under the strict guidance of his uncle Canon Akingbehin who conveyed him on his bike to his ecumenical post in Sabongida Ora and remained with him until he was enrolled at Ibadan Grammar School for his secondary school education and where he became the school organist on his first day at school. Apart from the organ he was proficient at playing several musical instruments including the flute and violin.

This early “disconnect” with a root family name “Olunloyo” is not unusual for many of us, the English idea of post fixing names with a common ancestral root name did not catch on initially. And the following adjustment of the family name is typical:

Horatio’s extracurricular interest in music did not appear to affect his academic work as he was able to complete what was then a six-year secondary education in just barely a little over 3 years. On graduation he was then employed as a teacher in the same school and eventually became the first Nigerian to pass the Inter B.A. and Inter B.L. diplomas of the British Law Exams from home, here in Nigeria. He also found time to work as a journalist, a trade unionist and civil servant at different times and in different parts of the country before he became the first indigenous Treasurer of the Ibadan Native Authority (I.N.A) at Mapo Hall, Ibadan. The competition for the post of Treasurer I.N.A was very rough and some of his rivals floated the rumour that with a name like Sowemimo he could NOT be a son of the soil but must be an interloper from Egbaland. To counter this, his uncle, Reverend Akingbehin starting with himself, made several members of the family add the surname OLUNLOYO to their names but not everybody could be reached because the family size was now large and of those reached, many did not comply. That explains why many family members do not today bear the

surname

Olunloyo.



*Horatio Vincent Sowemimo Olunloyo (1942)*

Olunloyo's mother hailed from the Popoola family of Ikereku, Abeokuta. Originally it was also a family of warriors but unfortunately one that was rather star crossed as it lost many of its young and promising able bodied men in the same ethnic conflicts that dominated Egbaland in the nineteenth century. However, not all of them were fighters. A few of them were traders and one of their kinsmen is reputed to have built the first privately owned story building in Abeokuta. The original family name was Ogungbola but this

got changed to Popoola in a bid to cast to the winds all the tragedies that had stalked their kinsmen over the years.



*Florence Oluremi Sowemimo Olunloyo (1942)*

Furthermore the Popoolas redirected and invested their energy into trading and the maternal grandfather Albert Adenekan Popoola flourished in the northern part of the country as a very successful merchant and furniture maker. He also practised as a farmer and had developed landed properties in Kano, Zaria, Kafanchan, Jos, and an extensive farming estate in Kogum River Station where he lumbered timber.

Marriage celebrated in the Livingstone at Lagos in Nigeria.  
 CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE.

Special Licence No. 1142

When Celebrated	Place Celebrated	Names and Surnames	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Signature of Registrar	Signature of Minister	Signature of Witnesses
7th January 1942	Livingstone	Horatio Vincent Swemimo	35	Bachelor	Bank Clerk	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>
7th January 1942	Livingstone	Florence Churemi Popoola	21	Spinster	—	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>

Married according to the rites of (religion) Abom

H. Vincent Swemimo  
 Minister

Principal Registrar of Livingstone  
Julianah, Balade, Lagos

In the presence of us 6 Witnesses

Marriage Certificate:  
 Florence weds Horatio  
 January 1942

His holdings in the south were however limited to modest houses in Port Harcourt and Abeokuta. He was the second child in a family of three boys and a girl but he ended up educating the children of his siblings as the other men died prematurely and their sister was not economically vibrant. His wife Julianah Popoola also came from a Christian and well educated family and was the aunt of the late J.K. Ladipo the owner of Lishabi Mills and pioneer of indigenous food processing industry in Nigeria.

With this background and setting, Adenekan Popoola was determined to give his children and relations the best education he could afford. Although based in the North, he enrolled his children and wards in schools in Ibadan and Lagos. His daughter Oluremi being the first-born was sent first to Kudeti Girls School and later gained admission to Queen's College Lagos for her Secondary School Education. While at Queen's College she met Horatio Sowemimo who was then one of the Chief Clerks at the Treasury on Marina and almost fifteen years her senior in age but who nonetheless made it a point of duty to wear his wealth on his back and brandish his brilliant academic record and this gained him the attention of young and eligible ladies.

The association did not go down well with Oluremi's father who, though based in Kano, did everything to break up the relationship but she was headstrong. Thus when Horatio proposed marriage to her in 1940, her parents flatly refused as they were ready to send her to England to study Nursing. Luckily she was under 21 and parental consent was needed for any lady to get married under that age. Her parents therefore used the intervening period to pile pressure on her by withdrawing their financial support and virtually disowning her. She somehow survived until October 23, 1941 when she finally became 21 and could thereby apply for a marriage license in her own right. Horatio and Florence were issued their marriage license January 1942. All accounts indicate they had almost 7 years of a very happy and blissful marriage during which she bore him two sons viz: Vincent Olusegun (1943) and Horatio Olumuyiwa (1945). Following the marriage, Florence Oluremi was rehabilitated by her parents and the relationship with the Olunloyos was normalised in a relatively short time. This was facilitated in this case by the common religious background shared by the two families and the weakness of the Popoolas for men in cassocks and surplice.

### **Life with Grandparents**

However, all that was shortlived as Horatio died suddenly on December 29, 1948 amidst the preparation to travel overseas to complete his law degree. This came as a rude shock as he was under the care of one of the most renowned practicing medical doctors in our land viz. the late Sir Samuel

Manuwa. However, the truth was that he had suffered from hypertension for an extended period of time and the ailment had taken its toll on his system. After Horatio's demise, Oluremi and her two sons relocated to Kano to embark on another phase of their lives.



*Vincent Olusegun Sowemimo Olunloyo (1953)*

#### Missionaries & Elementary Education

In April 1853, a Church Missionary Society (CMS) delegation arrived in Ibadan from Abeokuta to begin their evangelical work led by Reverend David

Hinderer and his wife, Anna. There, they met Oyesile, Bale Olugbode and ruler of Ibadan who asked Olunloyo, one of his quarter chiefs, to take care of the white missionaries. This was the beginning of the strong friendship between Olunloyo and the Hinderers as recorded in Anna Hinderer's book "17 years in the Yoruba Country"(1853-1870)" which was first published in 1873.

Anna in her book recorded how Olunloyo introduced and made available to David and Anna Hinderer, the local herbs/concoction for the treatment of malaria and thereby saved them from early death. David on his part persuaded and convinced Olunloyo to allow his two youngest children Yejide (6 years) and Akinyele (4 years) to come and live with him and his wife so that they could be taught how to read and write and thereby become the first pupils of the Hinderers in Ibadan. The story is told about how Reverend Hinderer achieved this on pages 120-121 of (Akinyele's *Outline History of Ibadan-Part Two* written by Kemi Morgan ); while comments on the career of Lowestoft Akinyele (Olunloyo) can be found in pages 149-150 of the same referenced document,

Akinyele had four other brothers viz: Opeagba (Kotoki) , Odesile, Ogunrombi Ojo and Akintan; and he saw to it that he educated as many of their children as possible and so did Yejide. This set up a chain reaction of which my father Horatio Vincent Sowemimo was a beneficiary having been trained and mentored by Reverend Canon Akingbehin, a direct son of Akintan, brother to Akinyele.

If you want to understand the reluctance of VOS Olunloyo to attend church services in his Unilag years, it may not be far removed from the fact that from the parents on both sides, he was "overchurched" even before he was born. The early loss of his father placed him in Kano, with his grandparents and hear him describe the experience:

*"My earliest recollections are those from my maternal grandparents' home in Kano where Olumuyiwa and I were the only children around under the care of our grandparents. Each day starts with family prayers to be followed by pre-assigned household chores. We thereafter get prepared for either school or church; choir practice and Sunday school. My grandparents were very particular about time management and we were not expected or allowed to be late for any programme. Furthermore, we were expected to give an account of our activities at the end of the day. For example we were expected to remember the subject matter of the sermons delivered and the lessons to be learnt from the allegories presented. It was a matter of pride to Adenekan that his grandson was selected as one of the two servers for the Anglican Bishop whenever he visited Holy Trinity Church Kano. The other spot was reserved for the Vicar's son of course. Such services were always nerve wrecking for him because he had to endure the anxiety of Olusegun dozing in the course of*

*the service and thereby making him the laughing stock of the congregation!"*

And it is easily appreciated that this "churchiness" was already there in earlier generations from the time of association with the Hinderers at Kudeti in Ibadan. But the young Olunloyos had to relocate to the South after a while. This is due to the usual family claims on the children of a deceased brother. Horatio Sowemimo's family members believed it was their duty to "recover" these children from their mother's people and went about that duty with vigour:

*"The Olunloyos had some difficulty in recovering custody of Olumuyiwa and me from our maternal grandparents who insisted they had the means and were prepared to be fully responsible for our education and welfare until such a time that they would need assistance from our father's relatives. This alarmed and aggravated the Olunloyos and led by Rev. Akingbehin, negotiated that we be allowed to come down south on holidays so as to fraternise with our other kith and kin. On arrival in Ibadan we spent some time with our uncle Akinniyi after which I was sent to live with Akingbehin in Gbongan who as vicar of St Paul's Church, was in charge of several mission primary schools; Olumuyiwa on the other hand went to live in Lagos with the family of our dad's immediate brother Akinniran and was registered at the St John's Aroloya Primary School. In the meantime, our uncles pleaded with the Popoolas that we needed to be prepared for secondary school education and it was common knowledge that schools down south were better suited for this than those located up north. They even reminded Adenekan that he did the same thing with his own children, starting with my mother!"*

Hence, from Kano, there came this short sojourn in Gbongan for the young Olunloyo prior to time for secondary school.

### Family & Politics

Beginning with the warlike entry into Ibadan and the pacification as a local chief, the first Olunloyo and descendants were never far from the political developments of the city, the region and even on the national stage. In each generation, at least one member of the family has been associated with politics or politicians in one form or the other.

In his lifetime, Horatio Sowemimo was close to many of the leading Politicians and Royal Fathers of his time in the Western Region of Nigeria. These included politicians like Obafemi Awolowo with whom he shared fraternity (in fact H.I.D. Awolowo was one of my godmothers). He was also friendly with Bode Thomas even though Bode Thomas did not always see eye to eye with Awolowo. Horatio also played host to Royal Fathers like The Oni



*The Reverend Canon & Mrs  
Francis Christopher Akingbehin Olunloyo*

of Ife and Akenzua of Benin whenever they were in Ibadan for official meetings.

Before Horatio's time, Lowestoft Akinyele, a direct son of Olunloyo, was reported to have been part of the leadership group, including Rev. Robert Scott Oyebode, Rev. Samuel Johnson, Rev. D Olubi and A Laniyonu that exercised leverage on the politics and social development in Yoruba land.

After Horatio's time, the political force and whirl wind in Ibadan was no other than Adegoke Adelabu who was a close friend of Akinniran, Horatio's younger brother. Furthermore, Adelabu's family had intermarried with the Olunloyos and it was not difficult to persuade Adelabu to concede a seat to Akinniyi, a younger brother to Akinniran, under the Action Group Party by agreeing not to field an NCNC candidate in Akinniyi's constituency. This allowed Akinniyi to enjoy a term in the Western House of Assembly having been returned unopposed! Unfortunately, this arrangement could only last for one term as Adelabu was killed in a ghastly car accident before the end of the session and thereafter emerged a new "*Pharaoh who knew not Joseph*".

The next prominent Olunloyo to dabble into politics was Chief Oyewole Olunloyo who was elected Chairman Ibadan Municipal Government under the banner of SDP while Dr.Omololu Olunloyo as standard bearer for the NPN later emerged as executive Governor of old Oyo State for a short lived regime of roughly three months having ousted the SDP regime of Bola Ige of the SDP. The last Olunloyo to arrive on the political scene has been one of Vincent's cousins, Mrs Folake Olunloyo-Osinowo of the NPN who lost her seat at the House of Representatives during the last federal elections.

### Secondary Education

To the question, "**With GCI in Ibadan, what informed the decision to come to school in Lagos?**" we have the candid answer, that "*I did not do well enough to be admitted since I took the common entrance exam for GCI.*" That belies the deeper reason and the attraction of Igbobi College and Lagos as a comfort zone for Vincent Olunloyo. It is also instructive to see how competitive it was to get into the great schools of those days.

*"The attraction of Igbobi College, Lagos was that I already had two cousins (Olalekan and Olufemi Olunloyo), in the school and that gave some comfort; the problem was that at one hundred and twenty pounds per annum the school fees at Igbobi was second to none in the country and this was not considered comforting"*

A significant portion of the socialization and formal inculcation of values takes place at the secondary school level. It is also the institution that initiates the selection of the pecking order for the next generation by

assigning competitive tasks and recognizing and rewarding those who distinguish themselves.

At Igbobi College, the goal was to produce a sound mind in a sound body imbued with a good measure of patriotism. The gradual transition from just a sound mind to include a sound body started during our time as students (1957-1963). Being a mission school, the daily routine accorded religion a significant role but at the same time promoted religious tolerance and accommodation by admitting students of different faiths and allowing them 'open days' to celebrate important festivals of their different faiths.

*"However, one thing that we were not prepared for at Igbobi was the process of initiating and organising resistance to constituted authority in cases of oppression and wrong doing. Thus, the typical Igbobi product, although prepared for a life of service to society, was more at ease in compliance than in resistance; was more of a civil servant than an initiator of change; more of a professional and teacher than a politician. Nonetheless schooling at Igbobi prepared you for two things in life viz: competition and collaboration."*

The Igbobi experience included the internalisation of social values of honesty and fair play embedded in law and order and public etiquette; the sharpening of the competitive spirit, both on an individual and group basis, as well as the general aculturation of the youth. Some of the teachers left indelible marks on their young pupils: this group included such people as Prof. S. Adeboye Babalola who doubled as the Principal and English Master, Mr. Talabi Esubiyi, the Vice-Principal who instilled the importance of punctuality and Mr. Guy Garguilo, House Master and Physics teacher who encouraged both scholarship and leadership values.

*"The competitive framework at Igbobi left little room for complacency. Contrary to what many of us tell our children, it was rare to have any student permanently co-signed to the first position in the class; instead we usually had a group of students jostling for the top position. In fact at Igbobi the class composition was occasionally reshuffled solely to sharpen the spirit of competition at the top. Fortunately we did not have that problem in our set as we had more than a handful of willing competitors in the persons of people like Adebomi, Desalu, Esan, Ogedegbe, Olunloyo ; etc. In the other arm of our class a similar exercise was going on between Fashina and some of our other contemporaries."*

The secondary school years were exceedingly successful. Not only did Vincent Olunloyo excel in the School Certificate Exams, he was one of the top students not only at Igbobi College but the entire country in the Higher School Certificate Examinations that followed two years later. By 1964, he

had won an ASPAU Scholarship to attend the Engineering School at Cornell University, USA.

### ASPAU & Cornell

The African Scholarship Program for American Universities (ASPAU) was the collaborative response of top US universities to the needs of newly independent African nations in 1960. At that time, the only established University College at Ibadan was barely ten years old. Three other universities were at conception stage and as a response, a group of American Universities funded by collaborating foundations and funding agencies granted fellowships to selected African students who met the following criteria:

*“To apply for ASPAU scholarship, an applicant*

*Must possess an outstanding Scholastic ability and capacity for intellectual growth, ...Must be a permanent resident of the country in which he is applying, and must have the intention of returning to the country to live and work at the completion of his degree,...Must be mature for his age, yet must be young enough to profit from undergraduate study. Preference will be given to candidates between the ages of 17 and 27,...Must be proficient in English” ASPAU*

Other conditions include being single and adaptability necessary to study in a foreign country. The HSC exams as well as the ASPAU selection process were exceedingly competitive. This was a scholarship scheme underwritten by the US to cultivate and groom students from African countries who are considered destined to occupy positions of power and influence in their individual countries. Students were selected based on performance on SAT and TOEFL exams and they were placed in colleges and universities from where America’s future leaders are expected to emerge.

After a few years, the scheme came under criticism from university administrators in Africa because it was starving their institutions of good students. You may recall that President Obama’s father was partly trained under such a scheme. To catch a glimpse of Vincent Olunloyo’s preparation for this competition, his relationship with his mother and an incident that occurred earlier in the Kano days could provide a clue. In response to the question, “Have you ever failed before?” here is the long answer:

*“Yes of course! When you are not fully prepared for an exam you are bound to fail. For example I referred earlier to some common entrance exams that I failed in primary school.*

*At the same time you sometimes have to define what failure means. Generally speaking, when you talk of failure you mean inability to get up to a predetermined goal or cut off mark, usually 40 or 50%. In a*

*competitive exam however, such as an entrance exam, failure may mean inability to score a mark that ranks below the number of available vacancies. I learnt fairly early in life that there could be different interpretations of the term failure.*

*I was in Primary III in Holy Trinity Primary School in Kano and it was customary in those days to issue weekly report cards based on tests in arithmetic and English each carrying 20 points. The math exam was usually administered on Wednesdays while we had the English tests on Thursdays in good time for the cards to be released on Friday. One week, I was down with malaria and my mother, using her better judgment, kept me at home on Wednesday. The following day I was strong enough to go to school to face the English test in which I was credited with 19/20. In order to discourage truancy on examination days, the school had a policy of recording zero for a missed exam, so I was not surprised by the recorded mark of 19/40 for me for the week. In fact I thought I had done so well having scored so high in English.*

*Unfortunately, my mother thought otherwise and accused me of bringing home a failure card. She then proceeded to flog me mercilessly notwithstanding the fact that I was not fully recovered from the malaria fever. Of course there was a lot of commotion as I screamed that I was about to be killed and several neighbours rushed in to intervene. I narrated what had happened and argued that had she not insisted that I could not attend class on Wednesday, the issue she was raising would not arise. Virtually all our neighbours saw reason with me and accused her of being unfair and high handed.*

*To everybody's surprise, my mother was not repentant but in fact came out with the counter argument that even if I was kept at home on Wednesday for my own good, that was no reason for bringing home a failing report. All that was needed was a 20/20 in English which would have resulted in an overall total of 20/40 for the week which would not be a failing grade. Later that night as she gave me malaria medication, I saw her sobbing but could not be bothered. Years later, after I became a Professor, I recalled the incident and wanted to know the reason for her behaviour. She too remembered the incident and wanted me to appreciate the linkage between aspirations and success or failure."*

The successful young people of those days often had mothers for whom there were no alternatives to competing and succeeding! Vincent Olunloyo, as we have seen was no exception! Even sickness or absence from school was not sufficient excuse to do poorly in an exam!

Upon graduating with a Bachelor degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1967, Vincent Olunloyo continued to the PhD program in the Theoretical and

Applied Mechanics Department of the same school. This was at the beginning of the Nigerian civil war so it was not necessary to ask why he did not return to Nigeria immediately. Life in general was challenging and greatly rewarding. Again, in his own words,

*“My overall experience at Cornell was quite rewarding; for one thing the institution gave me a sound education for which I am forever grateful. Furthermore, by appointing me Assistant Professor of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics in 1972, Cornell University pushed me into public limelight as the first BLACK person ever to be appointed into an Ivy League Faculty of Engineering.*

*It was however also at Cornell that I got married to Miss Adedoyin Adeola Badejoko Majekodunmi. The marriage had the beginnings of a promising relationship but subsequently broke down and was dissolved for irreconcilable differences. I am now happily married to Omoba Mojisola Adesola Odedina who has brought a lot of sunshine, happiness and stability to my life.*

*As icing on the cake, we are also blessed with such exciting and wonderful children any father would wish and pray for”*

### The University of Lagos

It turned out that all of Vincent Olunloyo’s preparation in life was to help him serve at the University of Lagos. This is the place where he came into, at the age of 30, from the position of an Assistant Professor at Cornell University in 1973 and is now an emeritus Professor at the age of 70. This association has flourished and endured such that a child born at its onset may also be old enough to be a professor at the same university.

Olurinde Lafe – also an alumnus of the engineering school at Cornell, now a professor and one of the first students Olunloyo taught in that first contact in 1973 had this to say:

*“He instantly became an incredible mentor and a huge academic star for me and my contemporaries as he landed in the University of Lagos in the early 1970s. Here was this young lecturer fresh with a Cornell PhD from the United States. He was lively, jovial and extremely approachable. He did not carry the stocky air traditionally accompanying the position of an academic lecturer. The students naturally gravitated towards him. He was highly admired.”*

I did not suffer from the same “love at first sight” like Lafe. I came into Unilag the same year that Professor Olunloyo did. My first impression of him was not that positive. I had been seeing him on the corridors with a trade marked “French suit” beige in colour. At that time, my heroes were several for different reasons. My best teacher was Olufemi Okurounmu, a graduate of



*Mrs (Omoba)  
Mojisola Adesola Odedina Olunloyo*

Harvard and MIT who taught us Thermodynamics and later Heat Transfer. He “spoke” thermodynamics as if it was his native language. He was always at ease in class and could explain any concept in a way that the most hopeless dullard (if any of us could be so described) would understand; the most interesting (or appalling, to some) by far was EE Okon, our Engineering Math teacher. He never allowed us to know what the double ‘E’ stood for insisting it meant “Electrical Engineer”, most intriguing was the fact that it appeared he made it his duty to show you knew no Mathematics even if you had an A grade in HSC. It was his duty to tell you what Math was all about. His handwriting on the board was illegible to many, if you dare complain, he would rub it off and carry on as if nothing happened! If you told him he came late to class he would explain to you that the lecture only began when the lecturer entered, hence it was not possible for him to be late; Some students naturally got testy, but Okon was more than ready. Once, a student said to him that his conclusion was very hasty. Okon, instead of getting angry as we had feared, retorted, “*and yours is even more hasty!*” He was so sure he would win the argument hence never needed to invoke the trump card of being a lecturer. Some of these were also returnees from the same ASPAU and program that Olunloyo had in Cornell. But the most famous of all was AO Awojobi, the HOD of Mechanical Engineering and the youngest professor in the faculty at that time. We called him “*Laiwowe*” because he would regurgitate the entire two hour lecture from his head; no pause, no looking at any notes. Even if you were not an engineering student, you could just go by the window to watch Awojobi perform! We also called him “*Professor Dead Easy*” as he would end the solution of any problem given to him, extemporaneously, by saying “*Dead Easy*”. These people completely overshadowed Olunloyo in my mind.

The first direct encounter I had with Dr Olunloyo was in my final year 1976/77. At that time, the ubiquitous slide rule (who can remember *Aristo Studio Log*) that engineering students always carried was giving way to the digital calculators. Olunloyo was the one who initiated that change and was naturally the custodian of the several of it we were allowed to borrow for our use. I did not return the one I had borrowed and I had hoped I could complete my examinations before returning them. Unknown to those of us who had these instruments, Olunloyo had determined that the only way to get back at us was to insist that we had to return the calculators at the exam halls, else we would not write our final exams! We pleaded to complete that first paper and return them immediately; He was adamant.

I was so sure that Professor Awojobi would take sides with us so I went up to his office and reported “*that lecturer who did not want us to write our exam*”. I sat in Awojobi’s office expecting him to tell Olunloyo to do as we had

pleaded earlier. I was horror struck when Olunloyo came in to the office: He gave me a nasty look and, alas, Awojobi was pleading with him to allow us into the exam hall! In turn, he made exactly the same demands he had made earlier and poor, poor me, I had no choice but to comply!

In spite of this incident, I had noticed three things that put Dr Olunloyo in a special class at that time: 1. He taught us Numerical Analysis in our final year and *insisted* that we must actually turn the numerical procedures to computer (FORTRAN) code. 2. He had his notes typed out in full and they were given (not sold) to everyone. 3. He passed papers around at the end of the session for us to judge his delivery.

I remember that we gave him poor grades since it was anonymous! We did not realize he kept the papers and could easily recognize some of us by our writing. Professor Oyediran, also an alumnus of Olunloyo's department at Cornell, was later to find out when he complained about his own students that Olunloyo brought out his own comments when we, as undergraduates did same to our lecturer!

It was after we returned from NYSC that we began to have different thoughts about our lecturers. Some whom we liked so much were not as likeable when we became graduate students and later faculty members. Whereas, some of the lecturers we did not like so much as undergraduates became our mentors at the graduate level. In this category, I will place Olunloyo and also Professor VA Akinsete.

The engineering faculty of the 70s was a star-studded faculty. This is what Olunloyo himself had to say about the list that made that group:

*"Academic staff were a collection of the brightest people you could find anywhere in the world .They came from schools like Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College, Univ of London, Harvard, Yale ,Columbia, Princeton, Cornell, Stanford, MIT, Cal Tech etc. The students were generally bright, focused and anxious to learn. The facilities were mediocre but not obsolete. More importantly, there was a vibrant and infectious intellectual environment that was focused on not just the artistic, but also the esoteric and utilitarian."*

### Engineering Analysis Unit

Those early years were spent in the Engineering Analysis Unit of the Faculty of Engineering. University of Lagos was the only one that had such a sub department. It was pioneered by EE Okon under the deanship of Professor AO Adekola. Drs Aderogba and Olunloyo joined that team in 1973. For the rest of my undergraduate years, all our mathematics and Mechanics were taught from that unit across the faculty. These three remarkable men became some of the ablest the nation has produced in these fields and the results remain extant especially with what became of their products in

practice and in academia. It also shows in the way Unilag engineering graduates of that era competed vigorously in the best universities.

Professor Okon was a remarkable man. After completing a PhD in Electrical Engineering at Kings College, University of London, he wanted another PhD in Mathematics! He was told that he had to go and start at the undergraduate level and he was undaunted. He went for it and obtained a first class degree in Mathematics from the same university. Somehow, perhaps because of school fatigue or others, he took Professor AO Adekola's invitation to start the Engineering Analysis Unit during the 69/70 session. His depth in both engineering and mathematics and the relation between the two is to be expected.

The late Professor Aderogba, after a first class degree at UI class of 1967, attended Nottingham University in the UK obtaining the PhD in Applied Math in 1971. He studied under AJM Spencer – one of the pioneers of Continuum Mechanics. It is remarkable that Professor Rodney Hill, perhaps the greatest name in the Engineering art of Plasticity was in his department at Nottingham at this time. Hill, it was, whose "*Mathematical Theory of Plasticity*" – the result of his PhD thesis at Cambridge, laid down the foundation of modern plasticity and remains a seminal, classical work in that area till date. The world associates the Hill's name with Cambridge but he was one of the giants that shaped Aderogba's academic life while at Nottingham before he later moved to the world stage at Cambridge. The third leg of this tripod is our man, VOS Olunloyo.

To this core group were later added Oye Ibidapo Obe, JN Oladunni, and the former Dean of Science, OO Ajayi. It was natural that there was a cut throat competition in those days among these people. That was more between Olunloyo and Aderogba as EE Okon appeared laid back at that time. As I was Aderogba's student and later mentored by Olunloyo, I was in a good position to see what was going on. Here were two highly successful people with great promise. The two "political parties" in Engineering saw them as their champions. The one had Aderogba to which the other presented Olunloyo! For each great achievement of one, there was a response from the other! You worked with Hill? OK, my supervisor at Cornell was GSS Ludford ; a joint graduate of both Cambridge and Harvard; and also a Von Mises Student! You an ASPAU fellow? I got a first class from UI, etc. This pitched battle came to a head one day after the headship of the department switched from Olunloyo to Aderogba and there was this argument on if Olunloyo or the department should claim the credit for the First Nigerian Congress of Applied Mechanics that was successfully held in the Department. Thank Goodness, they did everything except box each other and I was right there in the office as the graduate assistant in the department! That cut throat competition had one casualty: The continuation of the Congress of Applied Mechanics in Nigeria. Very sad!

Olunloyo became a Senior Lecturer at the University of Lagos in 1974 and by 1977 he had advanced to the grade of Associate Professor. There was a mini crisis at the Works Department of the University leading to the removal of the Director of Works. He was deployed to run that department as Acting Director in 1978.

It was from this post that he was offered the position of Professor of Mechanical Engineering, at the newly-formed University of Ilorin in 1978. He immediately became Head of Mechanical Engineering and Foundation Dean of that programme.

### University of Ilorin

At this point, Olunloyo was given the opportunity to run a system from scratch. Ilorin also employed at the same time, Professor IE Owolabi from University of Ife as Professor and Head of Electrical Engineering Dr Work from Michigan Technological University and a number of foreign lecturers were there at inception.

It was at Ilorin that Olunloyo initiated the Student Work Experience Programme SWEP for inculcating the discipline of technical arts into the engineering curriculum. The argument for it was that in the US and Europe, engineering undergraduates arrived at their respective universities with a number of technical skills from home. Some even have workshops in their garages or live on a mechanized farm. Our own students are coming from their villages or other situations that did not give them similar exposure. The SWEP was designed at that time to allow them during part of the first inter-session holidays, to undertake basic technical projects to expose them to some of these skills. That was a huge success!

It was part of the Foundation dean's duties to supervise the construction and equipping of the new facilities at the Permanent site of the Faculty of Engineering at Ilorin. Those buildings remain today in contradistinction to the others that were constructed at a later date.

Staffing. Olunloyo encouraged staff to the University of Ilorin at three levels. He encouraged senior to high-ranking lecturers and technical staff at older universities to join him. Came they did from universities of Benin, Lagos, ABU and Ife to mention a few. He specifically encouraged those from Kwara to come. OA Adetifa, TM Yesufu, BJ Olufeagba and SO Adeyemi (later VC FUT Minna) were in this category.

Olunloyo next went to top schools in the US, Canada and the UK and encouraged Nigerians close to the end of their doctoral theses to take interest in the new university. This class included Yemo Adeniji Fashola at Toronto, Akinyemi from SUNY at New York etc. These people were given letters of appointment and transported home at Unilorin expense! The last group were about fifteen new graduates some of whom were still in the NYSC program. They had obtained first class or second upper at the undergraduate

level. These, Olunloyo employed and sent to top schools in the US and Canada for the PhD. The leader of this class was Ayowole Oyediran who went to Cornell, Akinwande and Falusi to Stanford, BF Sule to Cornell, Abiola Akanbi to University of Michigan, etc. I wanted to go to Cornell, It was Olunloyo who insisted I must go to Canada as he said the universities over there are as good and he wanted variety in his new project. Adesiji Olorunmaiye, Momoh Jimoh Salami, Abayomi Babalola, Jide Familoni, Tunde M Olatunji and I were sent to Western Canada.

Olunloyo had a philosophy at that time: He told us that he was so sure we would all succeed. He just wanted to make sure that he added his name to our success stories! He did not think he was doing us any favour! I had not the least understanding of what he said! But, now look at what happened: Sule had been dean of engineering at Unilorin and handed over to another member of our group, Olurunmaiye before he went on to become director at the university's energy center. Salami is one of the professors in Malaysia today training some of our lecturers on study leave from Unilag! Akinwande is a professor at MIT in the department of electrical engineering! Oyediran, after his PhD at Cornell, went on to spend more than 15 years as a staff and later as consultant to the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA! He won a prize for setting up one of the most technologically advanced consultancies by a black man in the US! In fact, I do not know even one of us who did not reach the peak of any career they pursued! Olunloyo's selectivity and foresight was great!

When you look at his influence on the development at the University of Ilorin, it is difficult to realize he was there for only two years! This goes to belie the thinking that one really needs to stay at any post for decades to make an impact. There have been many others that had more years at similar positions with little long range impact! One of the reasons for the success of Olunloyo at Ilorin was that Professor Akin Adesola, the VC at that time had such an implicit trust in his commitment and ability. He could get away with anything! They settled all matters on the golf course facing Kwara Hotels in the evening. I personally witnessed this as I sometimes went to pick the balls so to eavesdrop on some of the conversation!

### **Unilag Dean and the Nigerian Water Data Bank**

Olunloyo left Ilorin in 1980 and in 1981 became the dean of engineering at Unilag. Again, he was a one-term dean. He later told me that it was better to leave before people begin to want you out of the way! I think the truth of the matter was that Olunloyo was a man with options. As far back as 1977, he had been involved in the documentation of the Water Resources of Nigeria in the project called the National Water Data Bank.

Based on enquiries and private discussions initiated by Dr. V. Bankole Martins of the Federal Department of Water Resources in the mid 70's, the NWDB

was conceived and developed as one of the earliest if not the first Electronic Data Bank south of the Sahara.

The project was generously funded by the Federal Department of Water Resources and led to the establishment of the National Institute of Water Resources (NIWR) in Kaduna where the Data Bank was housed.

The project had several positive spin-offs. Within the University of Lagos, it promoted the tradition of interdisciplinary collaboration in that it involved both academic and technical staff from Engineering Analysis, Civil Engineering, Computer Science and Geography. It is worthwhile to note that all the Distinguished Professors appointed by this University served on this project. Another was appointed at the recently concluded 50th Convocation Anniversary along with two other members of the team as Emeritus Professors. At the national level it enhanced the government's ability to deal with issues concerning water resources development, use and management both within and outside the country and in particular within the West Africa sub-region where it enabled a more robust interaction with both the Niger River Basin and the Lake Chad Basin Authorities. Several of the Team members served on the United Nations Technical committees on hydrology and Water resources. The Celebrant was subsequently awarded the NNOM partly on account of this work

You cannot understand the influence wielded by Olunloyo on certain events at Unilag in the early 1980s unless you situate the matter with the fact that, Akin Adesola, the vice Chancellor at Ilorin when Olunloyo was dean of engineering over there also came to be VC at Unilag after Olunloyo came back to Unilag. As I was personally away from Nigeria most of the early '80s, I don't know exactly where they played the golf this time around. However, the results of the trust in the association are still discernible. Electricity supply problem in Nigeria has been with us since the sixties in the days of ECN – Electricity Corporation of Nigeria and the Niger Dams Authority. It was an unmistakable achievement that between 1985 and 2005, Unilag was almost like an oasis of light in dark Lagos.

I do not give all the credits for this achievement to Professor Olunloyo. However, I can tell that, with his antecedent as the Former Acting Director of Works and the confidence of the VC, he was able to dare things that were really bold and effectual. Here are the incontrovertible results:

1. The total consuming capacity of the University was under 3 Megawatts. Yet the university had installed 6.6 megawatts in three generators.
2. There was an agreement with Ewekoro Cement plant to share spare parts and technical expertise as both organizations used the same kind of machine.
3. Spare parts were stocked to last no less than ten years.

These decisions gave Unilag an edge in power solutions that lasted two decades! Compared to that time, what would be appropriate at this stage is

no less than the operation of our own IPP. Professor Olunloyo was an innovator and the major designer and implementer of these projects!

### Consultancy & Other Projects

Among lecturers, Professor Olunloyo was quite innovative and had tremendous success in the public sector Nationally and Internationally. His CV is replete with several projects he led for the beginning with the Water Data Bank Project of the mid '70s. To mention a few, we have

- UNDP Statistical Data Consultant, National Technical Co-operation and Assistance Programme (1991).
- UNDP Computer Training Programme for Staff of the National Co-operation and Assistance Programme (1991).
- UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya.
- African Development Bank (ADB) Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

It might begin to appear that professor Olunloyo has the Famed Midas "golden touch" and always had success in everything he did. No, Olunloyo was not always successful. One major failed project he was deeply involved with was the National ID Card project. In fact I read some newspaper "articles" that denounced his involvement in that project. Now, as an esteemed friend once told me, once plenty of money is involved, everyone becomes of the same religion! This national project, which Olunloyo championed as the principal technical consultant to the Federal Government, despite the initial promise, became a major setback. This is captured in his "Letter of Withdrawal of Professional Services as Government Consultant on the Nigerian National Identity Card Project" addressed to the Minister of Internal Affairs in 2001

*"In view of the basic contradictions in recent Government decisions, and the expanded National ID Card Project, viz-a-viz the contents of the Report of the Collaborative Exercise Committee approved by government and used as the working document of the collaboration programme on which we based the Request For Proposal (RFP) and subsequent processing of the Tender documents we feel it is inappropriate for us to continue as Government Consultants on the Project. Accordingly, we serve our notice of the intention to withdraw our services from the Project "*

That way, Olunloyo's involvement with a very visible national project came to an abrupt end.

### Honours and Awards

A successful man is a golden fish and there is nowhere to hide. Of course we are in Nigeria and every monied man is honoured and hence no man here can be rightly judged on the basis of the honors given only! Yet, this write-up will remain incomplete if we don't mention some of the awards and honors

that have been heaped on Professor Olunloyo. Here, I choose to be brief and mention some of the chief honors:

- Member, New York Academy of Sciences; 1981
- Fellow, Nigerian Academy of Science (FAS); 1989
- Fellow, Nigerian Society of Engineers (FNSE); 1991
- Foundation Fellow, Nigerian Academy of Engineering (FAEng); 1995 (Was later president of the Academy.)
- Nigerian National Order of Merit (N.N.O.M) 1998, sole recipient.
- Fellow, National Mathematical Centre Abuja ( Designated Regional Centre of Excellence for Africa ); 2000
- Fellow, Third World Academy of Science (TWAS); 2012

Professor Olunloyo was close to the establishment in Nigeria be it the Government, Legislature or the Military. He was a constant invited lecturer at the National War College; over the last decade, he has been actively involved with the National Space Programme and had his way with the highest echelons of people in power that it would come as a surprise that he could ever develop close associations with anti-establishment people like the present writer. Again, there are several parts to the man. As a paraphrase of a much wiser man in another era, I would venture to say that if all the establishment people could combine the competence, passion and human kindness of VOS Olunloyo, I would have no problems at all with them!

### Epilog

As Soren Kierkegaard once said, *“Life is lived forwards but understood backwards”*. The life of a man, any man, can only be understood fully at the end. Our man is advancing in age. Yet, he has not reached the end. Opportunities may be reduced but they have not yet ended. With all his successes, he knows, there are things in life he would have done differently if he had a chance to go over things again. He also knows that he has been greatly favoured in life by the gift of a helpful family, on both sides, that gave, sacrificially, in order to ensure the early loss of a father did not abbreviate the hopes, aspirations and ambitions of a young life. He has been supported by friends and even total strangers in ways that left him benumbed if not stupefied. Again, like any man, he knows he has his admirers as well as detractors. Some in the latter group have no point. Others may have genuine grievances and legitimate claims. At the end of the day, man is man.

John Wesley said, *“To be ignorant of many things and to err in some is the common lot of mankind”* I don't believe that the celebrant today, despite his accolades, will detach himself from our common malady. He is one of us! As he clocks the age of 70, I hereby bring again to his attention, a theme which all the “overchurching” of youth would have told him over and over again:

that we are called, in this world, to the stewardship of the manifold graces of God and ***“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God”*** Micah 6:8.

And we wish you a mighty wonderful celebration!

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