

Sewo

The Journey so far ...

First Edition 1993



Pa, Dolamu Sopade



Madam Sikiratu Sopade

I, Adesewo Sopade was born on 15th March, 1953 in Mokoloki Village in the then Egba Owode (now Obafemi Owode) Local Government Area of the present day Ogun State, South-West Nigeria. My father, Dolamu Sopade a farmer, was a native of in Abeokuta while my mother Sikiratu Sopade (Nee Sonde) who hailed from Eleworo Village Igbihin Abeokuta, was a kolanut seller. I started my Primary School in 1959 at Africa Church School, Mokoloki but I could not go beyond class four because my father needed somebody to be following him to the farm; which I also loved because going to farm enabled me to escape the whip of the teachers who I considered wicked. This decision did not go down well with my mother, because she was the one who was buying my books and other school materials and stopping school would amount were to wastage of her resources on me.

On the 5th August, 1967 I travelled to Freetown Sierra-leone with my uncle Mr. Mathew Sopade who was a Tailor. While in Sierra-leone I engaged in petty trading and training as a tailoring apprentice. After about two years, my uncle, opened a beer palour at 48, Fourabay Road, Freetown and we used to have many customers. One of our regular customers then advised my uncle to send me back to school. Based on this, I was enrolled at Model Municipal Primary School, where I was put in class 6D, in January 1970. Initially, it was tough, but with the help of private coaching, I was able to adjust by the second term; and by the following year I gained promotion to class 7. In January 1972 I was admitted to secondary school and we were paying 9 Leon per term. In the beginning of second term my uncle travelled to Nigeria for a visit, but he could not come back to Freetown due to financial Constraints. Life became extremely unbearable for me, and coping was no longer possible, I had to stop schooling and on the 27th of March 1972, I returned to Nigeria.

Things were not easy in Nigeria too; my father could not afford the school fees of £34 per term, so he decided to take me to his nephew –Mr. Adenrele Sopade (Now Late) in Bariga Area of Lagos. His nephew had a Blacksmith/Welding workshop in Surulere. On the 4th of May, 1972 I started as a Blacksmith as apprentice. As the only person with him, I had a lot of work to do both at home and at the workshop. On a typical day I would trek all the way from Apeleyin Street in Bariga to Cole Street, in Surulere Lagos morning and evening; I usually left home by 5:00 am without any transport allowance. My only daily allowance was one shilling (10kobo) which was meant for my three daily meals. Transport fare then was 3peance from Bariga to Yaba. By the end of first year my allowance was increased to 15 kobo. Sometimes my father would bring coco-yam and my mother would send Gari through a third party to me as she was unable to come to Lagos on her own. My boss was not a religious man, hence we worked all the days of the year and we never observed any public or religious holiday not even the New Year day. Shortly, before the end of my second year, two new boys (apprentice) joined us, and this was a big relief to me.

My interest during this period is to obtain trade test certificate so that I could register at Labour Office. When I discussed this with my boss, he said I should provide 2 bottles of Gin, 6 bottles of Stout, 6 bottles of soft drink, I was able to provide all these, my boss prayed for me and gave me certificate of freedom. I was surprised, as if it was a miracle. I journeyed back to our village and informed my parents. They were equally amazed and they had to confirm from my boss, who then told them that I had successfully completed my apprenticeship.

How Survival Journey Started



**Sewo on bicycle at
Oni street, Surulere. 1974**

It was an unforgettable experience when I went to Ikoyi labour office for registration. I trekked back from Ikoyi to Apeleyin Bariga as I had no transport fare to return. Around 2:00pm that day, I stopped over at Oyingbo to check one of my uncles Mr. Bolade Sopade. His wife gave me food while he gave me 20 kobo as my transport fare. I did not spend all this money on transport, as I was already half-way through. The following day I went to one of my seniors Mr. Kasi (now late) to be his assistant in his workshop. This I did for about two weeks but I was not satisfied hence I decided to search for my own personal job; as the salary of an assistant would be too meagre for me. As an apprentice, I had already bought a bicycle for N15.00. One day in April, 1974 I took one scrap stove on my bicycle, and I decided to move round to look for customers (hawking) I remember vividly that the people in a mechanic workshop at 23, Oni street, Surulere notably Messrs Ayeni and Yemisi started to make jest of me, calling me "EASY SHOW" (my nickname), wondering what I was up to, but I told them I am now a "doctor" of stove. My first day as a "doctor" of stove was a very rewarding day for me as I was able to make about N6.00; subsequently I made between N15.00 and N20.00 daily. Due to the tedious nature of this job, (hawking) I was always falling sick; so I decided to look for a regular job in a company. This quest paid off, as on the 25th June, 1974, I was employed as a labourer in Dorman Long Construction Company in Ojota, Lagos. On a weekly pay of N13.00. This amount I later considered inadequate hence I was supporting it with income from my private work as "doctor" of stove. With this meagre income, I was able to rent a "back room" along Jagunmolu Street, Bariga. On 29th of August, 1974. I felt as if I was in paradise, the first day I slept in this room, because I had hitherto been sleeping along the passage; life began to change for better for me. On the 11th of October 1974, I along with other casual workers were sacked at Dorman Long. I rested at home for three days before I resumed my full-time stove repairing Job again. This marked the beginning of yet another round of struggle for survival.

On 12th January 1975, my father brought my junior brother (Oluwanbe Sopade) to be living with me with an instruction to take good care of him I had no problem with this, as I was used to grinding my pepper and cooking my food by myself because I was not used to patronising road side canteens (Bukas). Oluwanbe started school, everything was fine. I felt on top of the World the day, I bought my first transistor radio at the rate of N5.00. Around September 1975, I sat for Grade 3 Trade Test and I was successful. Through the assistance of one of my customers I was employed as a blacksmith Grade 3 by the Federal Ministry of Works at Ijora on a salary of N75.00 per month on the 3rd of May 1976. I did not spend out of my first six months salary as I was making money from my stove repairs. With this saving; I was able to buy a Vespas Scooter motorcycle with registration number OG 537 T for N450.00 on 5th October 1976. That same year I decided to promote myself from stove repairer to Gas Cooker repairer and my alias was up graded to "**Easy Show the Gas Man**".



**Sewo in Onasanya Street,
Surulere 1980**

The transformation from stove repairer to Gas Cooker repairer was not easy because these two items are 100% technically different. I was able to sail through due to the influence of a friend Mr. Lawrence Afuani (A Bendelite) who was working at Nido Gas Apapa. He was my “consultant” anytime I had a difficult job on hand. He was always ready to lecture me and put me through. Ownership of a Vespa motorcycle enhanced my mobility and I was able to visit a lot of Hotels after closing from work in the Ministry and also on Saturdays.

Life went on smoothly, on the 7th of November 1976 I met my wife former Miss Abosede Modupe Ajayi, a native of Ijebu Ode, Ogun State whose parent were then living in Oworonshoki, Bariga a few kilometres to my house. She was a tailoring apprentice. Following a short courtship we agreed to marry after finishing her apprenticeship. A year later she graduated from her tailoring training and on 25th of March 1978, the marriage took place, she was already pregnant. 1st of April, 1978 marked the arrival of a bundle of joy as this family was blessed with a bouncing baby boy. In the same 1978, I got my Grade 2 Trade Test certificate. My Salary was increased to N85.00 per month by the Ministry of Works. I considered this Salary inadequate and thus had to quit, eventually as my ultimate always had intension is to establish my own business. I eventually joined Lever Brothers Nigeria Ltd. (LBN) Apapa as a blacksmith on a salary of N129.00 per month and with overtime allowance I could earn up to N155.00 per month. For eight months at LBN I did not spend my salary as I was only maintaining the family with income from Gas Cooker repairs.



Sewo and his brother Oluwambe carrying Gas cooker

On a particular day, I went to Channel 10 Hotel, Ketu in the outskirts of Lagos, to repair a Cooker and I saw a Volkswagen Van for sale. The director of the Hotel eventually sold the bus to me for N800.00; I reasoned that this vehicle would be useful in carrying gas Cookers whenever I am fully established. After buying this vehicle, my account was depleted, so I had to use the vehicle on Saturdays and Sundays to carry goods on commercial bases in order to maintain my family. I later discovered that I could make more money than the Salary from LBN. Thus on my tenth month at LBN, I left the job, so as to face the new idea of carrying goods with my bus in order to raise money to buy more tools I needed for my business.

This dream came true, three months later when I got a shop in Bariga and in 1979, moved my workshop to 33, Onasanya Street, Surulere while here a lot of people patronized “EASY SHOW” as I was then called. Whenever they salute with “EASY SHOW” I will acknowledge or respond with “IS MY SHOW”. Towards the end of 1980, I personally make my first indigenous Gas Cooker and had a serious difficulty in branding it. However, one night I was watching an NTA Channel 10 programme “Drop a line” anchored by Taiwo Obileye and the guest was Chief Adebowale (an industrialist). He was asked why in Nigeria, there was no fridge with a Nigerian name? Chief Adebowale answered that there was Debo fridge. There and then I got the inspiration to call my Gas Cooker –Sewo Brand. (From Adesewo) This first Cooker consumed a lot of my money and I could not sell it, hence I took it to my village and on the New Year day of 1982 I used it to cook and found it to be very efficient. An idea then crossed my mind that when I get back to Lagos I would introduce Gas Cooker rental services. In the first week of March 1982, I started the Gas Cooker rental services; that same month the product started selling and those who bought were always telling others of its effectiveness. I employed more production staff. We equally produced ovens which were of high standard. We soon discovered that the workshop was inadequate. By 1983, God has provided me with a house in Mosan, Off Ipaja Agege Road. In 1984 when I wanted to register my business “EASY SHOW THE GAS MAN” was rejected by the Ministry of trade but eventually I was able to incorporate the business name with DE-SOPAS GAS COMPANY. In October 1984, when the space had become unbearably choked up we moved the workshop to my house in Mosan because of space. In Mosan, I was able to fabricate other machines like Soap Boiler, Candle Machine and Agricultural Equipment.

On the 10th of January 1988, a Sister of mine Alhaja Saheed invited me to a party at Igbore area of Abeokuta, where I met former Miss Bisoye Okebunmi whom I later married after ten months of friendship. I lost my father on 21th of March 1988 and on the 1st of October, 1988 the marriage between Bisoye and I took place at Okebunmi family compound, along Oke-Ido in Gbagura Area of Abeokuta. The programme climaxed with a reception party at Mosan, the same day I dedicated the Sikira House (in honour of my mother). Hence it was a double ceremony.

In 1990, I established the out-door catering services to complement my Gas Cooker rental business. To oversee this aspect of the business I sent Bisoye for a catering course at Iju, Ageeg which she successfully completed.

Now at 40, I thank Almighty God for what he had done for me and I am also praying for more healthy years and prosperity. (Amen)

Second Phase

2 0 0 9

Engineering life

As from 1976 when I graduated from stove to Gas Cooker repairs (as said earlier) my friends and customers started to call me "Engineer". With the help of my Vespa Scooter, I was able to regular move round some Hotels like Juliet Hotel, in Bajulaye Somolu, Apollo Hotel in Sabo, Yaba, Coconut Grovel in Western Avenue, Surulere, New Star Hotel Cleg Street, Surulere, Cooks Corner Ware house road, Papa, Lagos just to mention a few, to repair their Gas Cookers. During this period, I made sure I solved any problem relating to Gas Cooker even if it involved fabricating their spare parts. In 1980s I started maintenance job of Gas Cookers for corporate bodies like Lever Brothers in Apapa, Radio Nigeria Ikoyi, NTA in Victoria Island, Federal Government Guest House VI, Pfizer Pharmaceutical Company, International Paints and so on. In 1981, I started to manufacture Industrial Gas Cookers. It took me six months to design my type of unit. By 1982 I produced the industrial Gas oven called Economy. It was a breakthrough product for me. It took three months before I could complete it, but it was fully paid for before I finished it. It was made for a small scale cafeteria that was making meat-pie and sausage rolls in Surulere Lagos.

In 1984, when I moved to my workshop in Mosan, I was able to improve the model to the present status as all my products use Gas (LPG) and the prices were competitive. In 1994, I started another Journey on how to produce burner that would use Kerosine or Diesel. By April of that year, the dream came true, hence I was able to have oven on two systems. With this innovation, the product was accepted throughout the country. This was a big breakthrough for me. The biggest challenge which I nursed for over three years was Sausage Roll plant. It took another two years (totalling 5years) before I could produce it. I had to invest substantial part of my resources on it, but was a great success. I give glory to God. Between 1981 and 2009, I was able to produce different types of the following machines Gas Cooker Industrial Unit, Oven, Flour Mixer, Dough Milling Machine, Bread Slicer, Dough Moulder, Dough Divider, Grain Dryer, Gari Fryer, Soap Boiler, and Candle Making Machine, Sausage Roll Plant, Sealing Machine, Chin-chin Slice Machine and Chin-Chin Plant. Financing my researches and productions was never easy, but I thank God and my numerous customers who bought my products the profits of which I always channelled to the growth of the business. If your plan is to establish Bakery and fast food business, DE-SOPAS products should be your first choice because we do not only produce to your specifications but also to international standards I am grateful for sparing time to know a bit of my biography.



**1st Industrial Oven
Called Economy**

My Social life

All works and no play can make a brilliant mind dull. As I started in my first edition, if you are a creative person, you need to be thinking a lot about your project and if care is not taken, one can run mad. In order to avoid this abnormality and release tension you need to interact with intelligent people. In 1985, I joined the Rotary Club of Ipaja as a charter member. We used to meet every Wednesday 6 for 6.30pm at Ipaja Palace Hotel. I was a very active member. In 1986, I went to Rotary convention in Lag-Vegas USA.



**Sewo in Lag-Vegas,
1986**



**L-R Rot. Sewo,
Rot.Inner Oyeniji
& Akinyosotu
(Tencolas) in
London 1986**

That same year, I was given an award as the best Rotarian of 1986-87 by the District Governor, Rot Dapo Tejuosho, now His Royal Highness the Oshile of Egba Oke-Ona, Abeokuta. I also held the post of community director and president in 1997-98. Unfortunately, due to the economic depression, our club could not meet the Rotary International requirements on membership and the club had to fold up. While still a Rotary member, I joined (FLOCOH ESTATE CLUB) Federal Low Cost Housing Estate Club in Shagari Estate Ipaja, in April, 1990. I usually socialise in the club 3-4 time every week around 6-10pm. In FLOCOH Estate Club, we play games, crack jokes, enjoy music, food, and pepper soup with drinks of our taste. We sometimes go out of Lagos for 3-4day retreat and participate in members' social and religious activities/ ceremonies when invited as a club.



**Presentation of Award
to Sewo by Rot. Dapo Tejuosho
Now His Royal Highness, The Oshile of Egba
Oke Ona, Abeokuta**



Addressing in Rotary Club "Sewo"



FLOCOH CLUB MEMBERS AT OLUMO ROCK IN ABEOKUTA OGUN STATE NIGERIA 2007



**Engr. Sewo at Olumo Rock in Abeokuta,
Ogun State**



Engr. Sewo Sport Director



Engr. Daramola & Engr. Sewo in FLOCOH Club



Engr. Sewo Sopade received an award from the president FLOCOH Estate Club Engr. Wale Ogunubi while Mr. Dele Olafare (Club Secretary) Looks on



Engr. Sewo at Olumo Rock in Abeokuta, Ogun State



L-R Mrs & Engr. Sopade during his daughter's wedding in 2006

My Family Life

I married my first wife, Modupe Sopade (Nee Ajayi), in 1977 my second wife Bisoye Sopade (Nee Okeunmi) in 1988 and my third and final wife Folake Sopade (Nee Adenekan) in 1996. Together we are blessed with beautiful children male and female. I will not disclose the number as Yoruba culture forbids counting of children, I make sure all my male children come to the work-shop for training once they attain the age of eight (8) years after the school hours. My wives understand me a lot; we live together as a happy big family under the same roof. Their support, understanding and cooperation contributed immensely to my success as a creative "engineer" of many years.



Sewo and his wives during his 50th Birthday 2003



Sewo and his Childrens during his 50th Birthday 2003

Religion

I was born into a Christian family, I joined the choir in Anglican Church Kisi road when I was in Sierralone, but back in Nigeria, my master who trained me as a Blacksmith was not going to church. We were working on Sundays and even on Christmas and Easter Holidays. When I became independent, I continue not going to church. Up till now, I have not been attending any church, but within me I have a strong faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and I make sure my conscience is clear in all my dealings. However, my wives and children do attend churches of their choice.

My Hobbies

I like music so much, that my wife always complain whenever we were in ceremonies. Once I hear music, I would be the first person to jump on my feet up to dance no matter the crowd. I also love swimming, Road walk exercise, good jokes, research and current affairs.

Appreciation

God bless my country Nigeria and those that have contributed positively to my success story particularly those that have bought my products and those intending to buy in future. It is your patronage and encouragement that have contributed to my 35years of success in the engineering world.

Thanks for reading my biography.

Stay blessed

The struggle continues.

Engr. Sewo Sopade

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