

BIOGRAPHY OF PA GARIBA SOFI NDIMUFOA

Pa Sofi, as he was fondly called, was a husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather, and father-in-law. It is estimated that he was born in Babungo village, Ndop, in 1928. He passed to eternal glory on June 23, 2022, in Babungo, Ndop. Papa was the sixth of seven children. All of his siblings preceded him in death. Papa was married to three wives, but one of the marriages was short lived. He is survived by his two wives, 14 children, 67 grandchildren, 40 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild. He had 21 children, seven of whom are of blessed memory.

Papa did not go to school but was very intelligent. He made very good decisions that positively impacted his life and that of his immediate and extended family. His family knew him as a hustler. In his young age, he bought items from Babungo, then trekked down south (to Western Province and Southwest Province) to sell them. He did that for several years until something extremely tragic happened. Upon returning home to Babungo from one of his business trips, his two young children, one two years old and the other eight months old, died within a week. When his two children died, he moved to Bamunka, Ndop for about a year, then relocated to Buea Town in 1961. He told us that he had to run away from the bad people to find a safe place for himself and his one wife at the time. He got married to his second wife a couple of years after moving to Buea.

While in Buea Town, Papa sold beef under a master, then worked hard to become a chief butcher. As a chief butcher, he went to Kumba almost on a weekly basis to buy cows. Those were great days for us, his children, because he'd bring back Kumba bread and other goodies for us. He was financially comfortable and provided financial support to his siblings and extended family members.

Papa became a leader in the Babungo community in Buea. He was a mentor to so many young Babungo men. Several young Babungo men worked under him, selling beef. He was the president of the Babungo people in the late sixties. Papa was also recruited by Radio Buea to relay local news in the Babungo language from 1969 to 1972. He was a natural public speaker.

Papa continued to work as a butcher in Buea Town up until 1980, when his business took a downturn and he decided to send his wives and some of his children to live in Babungo, where he had built a house. He joined his family in Babungo the following year. Things were tough for him in Babungo, but he persisted, buying beef from wholesalers and retailing, to make ends meet. He stopped selling beef in 1998, then sold smoked fish and kola nuts thereafter.

He treasured his children. Papa told us time and again that his wealth was his children. He created time to connect with us. When we were young, he would assemble us and tell us stories and crack jokes. During those assemblies, he would test our knowledge of the Babungo

language by asking us how you would say this or that in Babungo. Those were moments we looked forward to.

Papa hung out with his friends a lot. After a long day of work, he would come home, take a bath, dress up nicely, then head out to hang out with his friends. He enjoyed drinking and chatting with them. He was someone who found pleasure talking with people and sharing his life experiences with them.

Papa travelled quite a bit. He travelled to all the four corners of Cameroon, to Nigeria, and to the US in 2005 to visit his children. Papa was amazed by the things he saw in America but didn't want to stay for more than three months because, in his own words, "it felt like he was in jail."

Papa never went to church. He often said that his church was in his heart and we, his children, saw the truth of that statement by the way he lived his life. He was a good person. Additionally, he was a very peaceful person and a peacemaker. We never saw him quarrel with anyone. He always said: "me kay kee nu ya wuh me" (I don't have any problem with anyone). He did not associate with people that he believed to be troublemakers.

Papa lived a very simple and humble life worthy of emulation. We are grateful that he is now resting in the bosom of his Creator. May he rest in perfect peace until we meet again, to part no more.

