

ELECTRIC - eclectiC

These words describe this immigrant citizen from Nigeria. His electric charisma lights up a room, captivating those present as he speaks of his businesses, philosophy, family, life goals and wide-ranging interests. His zest for life and regard for people genuinely sweep his listener along exuberantly. As our interview moved along, his manner was genuine, warm and open. He had dancing eyes, an infectious smile and an easy, receptive approach to often probing questions.

My prior research left no question that Ogbonna Abarikwu (pronounced O-bun-ah A-bear-e-coo) belonged in my select list of intriguing successful small business leaders. My experience during our interview was much more gratifying than I expected. It was full of lessons that can help readers who may be eager to create their own businesses, yet hesitant and fearsome of the risks they might encounter.

Ogbonna, a man of small physical stature, with a commanding poised, presence and a giant appetite for life and his work, presented me with a great range of contradictions.

He is eclectic with wide-ranging interests in skiing, golf, antique cars, theater, the arts and music and enterprises and businesses totally unrelated to each other on the surface. Some already operating and growing. A secondary group of businesses in the planning stage and others on his future wish list.

Also attractively religious, he spoke eloquently of his faith as taught and practiced by his parents. He had a solid, self-reliant manner; he was sure of his skills and knowledge. Ogbonna is a decision-maker without fear of risk - very much an engineer who sweated out all the details before tackling each challenging job opportunity.

Ogbonna involves his staff in all the processes with obvious respect for them, that is returned in kind. And, he is proud of his family with extensive plans for their education.

His is a story of striving to live the life that immigrants come to America to obtain. The difference with Ogbonna is he is determined to give to get, to share his fortunes with his employee family, his community, his family back in Nigeria and with the younger people whose education he wishes to contribute to. He strives to earn the rights he has struggled to obtain. Ogbonna is a unique type of entrepreneur who believes it is his obligation to help build his adopted country's future and protect its vital environment.

Much of Ogbonna's story you will read are in his own words. He will share his thoughts on family, faith, childhood, work, play, country and future.

Before getting to know today's Ogbonna through his work ethic, accomplishments, personal philosophy and his community activities I explored his early formative years.

I led into the past by asking Ogbonna to describe the person he believes he is today.

Okay, I believe I am, well truthfully the first thing that comes to my mind is humble. I think I was raised that way. My dad was an extremely humble individual and I think in watching him and in growing up around him, I just couldn't help but inherit that. I am an extremely hard-working person. I don't want to use the word workaholic because it has a negative connotation to it sometimes, but I am a doer. Words are wonderful, I like words, but prefer actions. When I do, I completely believe that I like to give it my all, I don't like to settle for less. That attitude has served me very well. But when I was going to school and when I graduated and first went into a professional job position here in America, the combination of determination to give the best at every opportunity significantly resulted in some of the opportunities that I was given. So I do believe and I hope I am seen as a humble person and one who really works hard. I want to always provide a solution of problems. I don't dwell on results once I get there. It may frustrate some people because while they want to pop the champagne and celebrate, I am ready to go to the next task. I love my family so very dearly. I really believe

OGBONNA, A MAN OF FAITH,
WIFE CONNIE AND THEIR
BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN

