



Painful Loss

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Beloved dad loses life in dock accident

By Sheria Brathwaite

Two siblings are left without a father and a cherished family tradition after a tragic accident claimed the life of a much-loved, veteran Bridgetown Port dock worker early Friday morning.

Jeffrey Broomes, 64, affectionately known as 'Milk', died around 5:50 a.m. while he was loading a container on a ship, according to a police report. It is understood a falling container pinned him against another.

Broomes is being remembered as a dedicated docker and foreman at the port with an easy-going nature and unwavering commitment to his job with dreams of a life after a lifetime at the harbour.

He had planned to retire next year, family members told **Barbados TODAY**, with daughter Jamelia Broomes, 24, and son Josimar Broomes, 30, a fellow dockworker, looking forward to continuing the tradition of travelling each year to New York for a vacation.

The impact of this tragedy is particularly profound for Jamelia, a police officer who, despite her training to remain composed, found it overwhelmingly difficult to cope with the loss of her father. Her brother, who was with their father during the accident, is also struggling to come to terms with their loss.

"I found out around 5:30 a.m. when my brother called me," she said.

“My brother works with him and he was there when it happened. When he called, I just put on my clothes hard and went straight down there and I saw everything. It was devastating, it is a very hard thing to experience.

“All I can say is that my father was a very easy going man, he had no issues with anybody. He loved his job. He was a docker, the foreman. He was on his way to retire and was coming out next year. I would always say ‘Daddy why you don’t come long home?’ He would always say he giving it one more year. He just loved to work. If they called him out now he would stop what he doing and go. He just like work bad.”

Jamelia fondly remembered her father as her travel buddy, with the annual New York getaway being a cherished tradition. Their close-knit relationship revolved around these journeys, and the last time she saw her father was Thursday night when he unexpectedly went to work. Little did she know it would be their final farewell.

“My dad and I travel; we are travel buddies. He and my brother would travel once every year and he and I would travel every year in September, but this year we went in July. We would always go New York, every single year, even during through the [heightened phases] of COVID-19. He does just be there for the trip while I am the body [who] shop down [the place].

“We had a close-knit relationship; we would do everything together.”

Recalling last seeing him on Thursday when she got home around 7 p.m. during a break from her duties, Jamelia said she had no idea he went back to the port when she left.

“I didn’t know he was going to work because when I got back home around 1 or 2 a.m., I thought he was sleeping. He usually goes to work with my brother but my brother’s car wasn’t home and I thought that my brother was with his girlfriend. So I didn’t know that was the last time I would have seen him,” she said just before she burst out in tears.

This tragic incident brings back painful memories of loss for the Broomes family, as his first-born child, Jamal Broomes, drowned a few years ago while attempting to rescue a swimmer at Brandons Beach.

The Bridgetown Port community, especially Jeffrey's colleagues at the Barbados Workers' Union (BWU), expressed their condolences and sadness at the loss of a beloved colleague who had dedicated over three decades of his life to the port.

BWU General Secretary Toni Moore visited Broomes's family and partner, offering support and emphasising the risks that workers like Broomes face daily.

"Our hearts go out to all touched by this devastating loss. For over three decades, Mr Broomes, with his unwavering dedication, cemented his legacy at the Bridgetown Port, winning the love and admiration of his peers," Moore said in a statement.

"As he neared retirement, this tragedy took away a soul cherished by many. The distress is palpable, especially for his son, who was with him during this fateful event. He stood as an emblem of dedication. His passing is a poignant reminder of the great risk workers face."

Counselling services were made available to port staff.