

DEAR EDITOR: MY DAD, SHELDON GOMES, EPITOMISED GRACE, HUMILITY, AND GENEROSITY...

👤 Letters to the Editor 🕒 Wednesday 7 October 2020 📁 Cricket, Volley

"[...] His departure was both sudden and unexpected. One could say it was in his nature. The only person who could truly say they knew Dad's movements [...] was his travel agent..."

The following Letter to the Editor on the passing of former Trinidad and Tobago cricketer Sheldon Gomes—a former Arima, Holy Cross and QRC stalwart—was penned by his son, Mark Gomes:



Photo: Former Trinidad and Tobago national cricketer Sheldon Gomes. (via Mark Gomes)

It was 3.12pm on Sunday 4 October when our country experienced a sudden jolting of the earth. Once the shaking of that 5.2 earthquake was behind them, most people probably just shrugged their shoulders and went back to whatever they were doing.

Not I. Not any member of the large Gomes clan. For us, the tremor held more significance than for others. With good reason.

Within an hour that very afternoon, one of the most genuine, humble and gracious human beings that I have had the pleasure of knowing in my entire life was being sent off on his final journey. That man was my father, Sheldon Anthony Gomes.

When beggars die, Shakespeare tells us in *Julius Caesar*, there are no comets seen.

His funeral, beginning at 4pm Trinidad time, was *'attended'* online by well over 100 participants from several corners of the globe. His younger sister Helenize was the face of the blood family in Trinidad along with Hilary Angelo Gomes, his younger brother. Uncle Larry's moving tribute, voiced by Paul, Dad's second son, provided powerful evidence of the tight bond the brothers shared.



Photo: (From left to right) Anne, Paul and Shelly-Ann pose for the camera at the funeral for Sheldon Gomes. (via Mark Gomes)

Dad's sporting peers were well represented as were the Arima contingent with whom he shared a deep and special bond. Also in attendance were the Abasalis, for whom he was considered family.

It was a farewell full of laughter and tears, jokes, fond memories and poignant moments, touching all of us who witnessed it. Sharing their sentiments at the podium were his youngest daughter Shelly Ann and her husband, Edward Anthony Weigert. His heartfelt eulogy left him occasionally choking back the tears and quite unable sometimes to say what was in his heart.

Also speaking were Dad's close friend Asheera Abasali, his niece Rachel, his ex-wife Anne and Helenize.

In recent times, Dad had not been without his health problems. Over the last few months, three times per week, he took the short walk from Shelly Ann's house in Las Vegas to the nearby hospital to get the dialysis he needed. And yet, his departure was both sudden and unexpected.

One could say it was in his nature. The only person who could truly say they knew Dad's movements, whether he planned to travel to New York, Las Vegas, Brazil, Thailand, Miami, Utah, back to Trinidad or somewhere else, was his travel agent. But even he was caught completely off-guard on 15 September when Dad bought himself that dreaded one-way ticket...



Photo: Sheldon Gomes (right) with his grandson Luca. (via Mark Gomes)

I was gutted by his passing, the suddenness of which greatly saddened me. But I am not now overwhelmed by it. I take great solace in knowing that, in Las Vegas, he was surrounded by pure, unconditional love.

I am the Big Brother, the oldest sibling, number one in the chronological order. But I can say without rancour, without jealous and without risk of error that, along with Paul and Natasha, I am joint number two in the race for his love.

Shelly Ann was Dad's beloved, his everything. Sure he loved me and Paul and Natasha in the same way. But it was not quite to the same degree that he loved our youngest sister.

She had Dad's good nature, his pure heart, his generosity of spirit. She brought out the best in him and he in her.

So if he had had to choose one place on this Earth to spend his final days, it was indisputably with Shelly Ann.

Although he was cremated in the USA, Dad's final resting place will be in his beloved Trinidad and Tobago. Once the T&T borders are opened, his ashes will return home to be interred in the RC Cemetery in Arima, not far from where his navel string is buried.



Photo: The late Sheldon Gomes (right) and his younger brother Larry Gomes.

*Both brothers represented Trinidad and Tobago at cricket while Larry was also a household name for the West Indies team.
(via Loop TT)*

At the appropriate time, the family will inform everyone who may wish to pay their final respects, Covid restrictions permitting.

So let me here express my sincere gratitude to all those individuals from all walks of life and groups who came forward to share their memory of my father and say such kind and generous things about him.

Inter alia, WIPA, the TTBC, the Past Cricketers Society, Mr Earl Best and Selby Browne and his other QRC 1967 & 1968 teammates, the Minister of Sports, the Arima Community Info Resource Centre, the current Mayor of Arima, former Arima mayor Elvin Edwards, his Holy Cross teammate and childhood pal, West Indies coach Phil Simmons and his very close friend Dilip Ramkissoon all offered warm tributes.

That made us all proud. And thankful indeed.

Sheldon Anthony Gomes, Dad, you definitely are gone too soon. But I think you know that you set a very high standard and were a sterling example for us all—your children, your grandchild, your surviving brothers and sisters and all those whom you have touched.



Photo: Sheldon Gomes stares into his horizon in Brazil.
(via Mark Gomes)

We shall all strive to conduct ourselves with the same grace and humility and generosity with which you carried yourself.

Rest in eternal peace, Dad. Until we meet again...

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