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USMWF - Family Members

My dad worked for local 137 Union for Operating Engineers for over 30 years. His job was very important to him, he will always be the hardest working man I ever knew. He took his job very seriously. We always made fun of him because he always went to sleep around 7pm but that was because he had to be up very early. He always said he needed his sleep to be on point at all times at work. My dad was an amazing man and although work was a large part of his life he enjoyed many other hobbies. He loved fishing, hunting, riding his motorcycle, but most of all he enjoyed time with his family and friends. I am 25 years old and have two younger brothers 23 and 21 years old. My parents divorced in 2011 and he was in an amazing new relationship for the past 10 years. He was very much in love and got married one year prior to his accident. My stepmom has 2 daughters and it was the biggest blessing how we all got along so well. Life was great, we were all happy together.

The last time I saw my dad alive and well was Thanksgiving 2013. A few days later my dad got into an accident at work that caused him to lose his life. I just started a new job and that night was my first real shift. I got the first call while I was getting ready for work that my stepmom and brother were on the way to the hospital. I was unsure what to do but decided to go into work not knowing how severe the situation really was. I got another call an hour after being at work suggesting I get to the hospital. I remember just staring off with a terrible feeling. My dad had been hurt on the job before but this time it felt different. I quickly left work and drove to the hospital with my other brother. My entire family was there waiting while my dad was in surgery on his pelvis. That is when I learned about his incident. My dad was a concrete pump truck operator and an extremely skilled one if I may add. Many people called him the “smooth operator”. That day my dad was on a job working on a mock-up of a project for the DEP. This project would link the Catskill and Delaware aqueducts. To this day I am still not 100% sure as to the details of the incident. He was just there to pour the concrete when a retaining wall collapsed. My dad was standing on a scaffold high above the job which also collapsed with the wall. My dad and 2 other men were trapped underneath. One of his coworkers was pronounced dead at the scene. He was trapped under the collapsed wall for a considerable amount of time. My dad was rescued and flown to Westchester Medical Center. The third man was taken to a local hospital and later released.

After my dad’s surgery he was moved to Trauma ICU. He was in critical condition and my world started spinning. We waited around for the doctor to tell us how it was not looking good. He explained my dad was suffering multiple serious injuries. His body was completely crushed and his internal organs were failing. We sat awake in the waiting room all night while

they cared to him. It was around 4 in the morning when a nurse came out to warn us my dad's heart stopped and they were trying to revive him. It is very hard for me to relive this and the emotions that come over me are so terrifying. I will never forget the moments on the floor outside the TICU. We were all hysterical; screaming, crying, and begging please don't leave us. Looking around at my family in such pain has forever changed me. My stepmom screaming for him will forever ring in my head. They were able to revive him and keep him alive for another 7 days. In those days we did not leave the hospital. We slept (or at least tried) on the floor, we didn't shower, and barely ate. My world was crashing down on me and I had absolutely no control over it. Those days were without a doubt were the hardest days of my life. It was a constant rollercoaster, not knowing what was going to happen. We were very fortunate they were able to keep him alive that long so he was able to take his last breath surrounded by his loving family. On the other hand I have to live with those memories for the rest of my life.

My dad's services were heartbreaking but still did not even feel real at the time. I will never forget watching my brothers carry his casket with tears in their eyes. I know how much it destroyed them and therefore it destroyed me. To say life has been a struggle since my dad passed would be an understatement. I left my new job and moved in with my stepmom. I took care of her for the entire next year. She was not able to function for many months. I had to put aside my pain and help her with hers. Many nights I would find her in her closet screaming for him. It was devastating to watch her suffer and intensified my pain. To complicate things even more, my dad was only 50 years old he died with no will.

Considering this happened out of completely nowhere, none of us had time to prepare

including my dad. Although we all remained extremely close for a good amount of time after he passed, legal issues have caused many problems between us. At the end of the day we were only family because of my dad and now that he is gone it is challenging to all agree on everything. Everyone is dealing with their own pain and grief in their own way that emotions get the best of us at times. I think there is a part in each of us that still believes this is a dream and that he will be coming home. When we realize that is not the reality anger takes over.

The property that the job site was on was owned by a large company Halmar International. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration concluded a six month long investigation. The company was cited for two serious violations of workplace safety standards at the site. The first violation was issued because three braces to support the formwork that workers were pouring concrete into were missing, leading the structure to collapse. The second violation was issued for not having the drawings for the formwork on the construction site. "Serious" Violations are issued for hazardous conditions that could result in death or injury. Those serious violations were each \$7,000 so total of \$14k. Let me inform you, the aqueduct project is a \$21.2 million dollar job. Halmar contested the two serious safety violations and received a \$5,000 settlement. There is no price or amount of money I would give to have my dad back but there is no way that is even close. I have to live forever with a broken heart and horrible memories while this company only had to pay \$5,000.

My dad was taken from us way too soon. I cannot stop thinking about how I've been cheated. I am blessed with an amazing boyfriend that my dad will never get to see me marry. He will never be able to walk me down the aisle or give me a father daughter dance. I know without

a doubt my dad would have made the best grandfather in the world. But he will never meet my children. Although I suffer every single day of my life with this I have faith I will come out a stronger person. Most of my worry is for my younger brothers. They are so lost without him and it continues to intensify. They have no one to teach them about life and all the things that they love. My brothers always planned on following his footsteps and get into his union. Now I have fear that I will lose them too. Going to work should not be a grave mistake. We must do something to make these jobs safer. People come to work but have a family at home waiting for them, counting on them to come home. I don't wish this pain on anyone and I must make it my mission to help make changes before it happens again.