

NEWS

ETHIOPIAN-BORN AIR CANADA PILOT PREPARES TO REBUILD DOMINICA 38 YEARS AFTER HE RENDERED AID TO THE ISLAND FOLLOWING HURRICANE DAVID

SEPTEMBER 23, 2017 STEVE FOERSTER

In 1979 Hurricane David devastated Dominica. Just days after that disaster, a young Greek-Ethiopian resident in Canada and barely out of his teens packed his bags, gathered some chainsaws, and with other humanitarian-inclined Canadians, traveled to render aid to our island.

To make that sacrifice the young Demetrius Apokremiotis delayed his plans for flight school. After clearing roads and spending time helping Dominica, he has spent almost four decades as a pilot. Today the Air Canada pilot is making preparations to rush medical supplies and aid to Dominica with his Ethiopian friend Mel Tewahade, financial advisor to the Ethiopian Crown Council led by the grandson of Emperor Haile Selassie, Prince Ermias Sahle Selassie Haile Selassie.

This moving story of commitment to humanitarian service has brought tears to the eyes of many and mine. In the letter sent to Rebuild Dominica on September 22, 2017, Demetrius mentions a young boy "Danny Lugay" as playing music for him at the home of his hosts, the Lugay family of Goodwill. I know Danny Lugay, as we attended the Dominica Grammar School in the 1970s and lived not too far from each other. That same Danny Lugay is now Member of Parliament for Goodwill, the district in which Dominica's main healthcare facility – the Princess Margaret Hospital PMH) – now lies in ruins. The aid being gathered with the leadership of Mel Tewahade and

Demetrius Apokremiotis will aid the PMH to rebuild and serve the many Dominicans wounded by the cruel force of Hurricane Maria or those who are otherwise ill.

May this inspiring tale of service to humanity urge us on to redouble our efforts and aid those on Dominica and other parts of the Caribbean now suffering during this awful hurricane season of 2017.

Gabriel Christian, President Rebuild Dominica

Letter

Dear Mel and Gabriel,

I was in Dominica shortly after hurricane David hit the island. It is with great sadness that I witness the latest devastation brought upon the island by hurricane Maria. We were a team of seven volunteers equipped with a set of chainsaws some hand tools and some food when we arrived. The airports in Antigua and Dominica were very chaotic and most of the people were just coming to terms with the reality of the recovery mode.

After clearing roads etc we just started gathering the large size debris and cut it to smaller usable sizes and began repairing the small houses in Roseau and later on in other towns. Even though the people were dealing with a horrific trauma, they were extremely hospitable and kind. I still cherish the fond memories of Daniel Lugay the ultimate athlete and musician. How his parents adopted our whole team and taught us to eat our food after it cooled down so we would not overheat. I think they blessed us more than we blessed them.

I do not know how to get in touch with my old friends from Dominica. I just want them to know I am thinking of them, praying for them and hopefully will be back to help.

Captain Demetrius Apokremiotis

