

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Canadian killed in Mexico drawn to country by love of biking

Kenneth Klowak was an avid mountain biker who built bike trails in such places as Ontario, B.C. and Jamaica

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For years, Kenneth Klowak's work took him across the country and around the world.

An avid competitive mountain biker, the 43-year-old Ontario man built bike trails in such places as British Columbia and Jamaica.

And it was this work, his family says, that brought him to Mexico, where he was shot dead at the side of the road last week.

"He loved to bike, he lived for playing and doing fun things," said his cousin, Lacey Klowak. "He never wanted to grow up."

A native of Mansfield, Ont., a small town northwest of Toronto, Mr. Klowak had spent most of the last two years working for a trail-building company in Jamaica. Friends said that he had recently gone to Mexico to work on a project and was supposed to travel to Portugal to visit trails there.

He was killed last Wednesday.

According to reports on news websites in Mexico, Mr. Klowak was driving with a co-worker near the town of Allende, in the northern region of Piedras Negras, when he encountered armed gunmen at a roadblock.

He drove through the roadblock and the men gave chase, but his sport utility vehicle crashed and flipped, and the men giving chase got out of their vehicle and shot him dead, the report said.

The second man was injured, according to the report.

Officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade declined to release any details on Mr. Klowak's death, but confirmed that a Canadian had been killed in the Piedras Negras region of Mexico.

"Canadian consular officials in Monterrey and Mexico City are working closely with local authorities to gather additional information, and are providing consular assistance to the family," DFAIT spokesman Alain Cacchione wrote in an e-mail.

Lacey Klowak said her cousin was unmarried and didn't have any children. She said he had worked for his father and uncle at a glass business, but quit to build trails.

Cassidy Klowak, another cousin, said he was also a successful competitive mountain biker.

"He was a really easygoing guy, he had a lot of friends," she said.

Brian Earle recalled biking with him frequently in Mansfield, Ont., for more than a decade.

"Every Tuesday and Thursday, like clockwork," he said, adding that his friend took up downhill bike racing in later years.

Mr. Klowak's friend Marshall Paul, who visited him in Jamaica and rode with him, said Mr. Klowak had moved down there to build million-dollar trails on a coffee farm.

"Ken moved there, lock, stock and mountain bike, and has loved every minute," he said. "He was finally happy and was living life in the fullest."

Mr. Klowak's funeral is scheduled for Thursday in Orangeville, Ont.