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Guest at Royal Solaris Resort in Cancun Falls to Death in Elevator Accident

By Steven Henshaw, Reading Eagle, Pa.
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Jun. 24, 2006 - A Wilson High School student fell to his death in an elevator shaft in a resort hotel in Cancun, Mexico, his family said Friday.

Andrew R. Smith, 16, son of Harold D. and Nancy A. Smith of 2513 Simon Drive, Spring Township, died of severe internal injuries after falling Wednesday in Royal Solaris hotel, his mother said.

The U.S. Consulate in Cancun confirmed that Smith died Wednesday of an accidental fall but provided no details.

Smith, who would have started his junior year in September and was a member of the high school football team, was vacationing with his parents, brother Shawn A., 19, and other relatives, Nancy Smith said.

She said the group flew to Mexico last Saturday and had planned to stay for a week.

A few hours before the accident, Smith had been riding personal watercraft with a friend and Wilson classmate whose family was staying at another hotel, Nancy Smith said. She did not identify the other family.

She said Andrew and the classmate were waiting on the fourth floor of the hotel for an elevator.

"Andrew and his buddy were standing by the elevator -- it was taking a long time to come up," Nancy Smith said. "He (Andrew) saw another elevator that was partitioned by two or three pieces of plywood, like an accordion. He said, 'I think we can use this elevator.' As he pushed the board, he fell."

She said the partition had no sign warning of the danger.

Hotel officials declined to comment.

The family flew back to Berks County on Thursday night without Andrew's body. They were making arrangements for the body to be returned, she said.

Nancy Smith described her son as fun loving.

"He was a goofball, a big, 215-pound, pure-muscle, wonderful, happy funny kid," she said.

Wilson School District officials will have counselors available during the day Monday for any students who feel they need help. Counselors also were made available Friday to respond to the needs of students who may have heard about the death.

"We're extremely saddened to hear about this accident," said Jonathan Heintzman, a district spokesman. "By all accounts, Andrew was a well thought of young man and had a promising future.

"It's just a tragedy."

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