

Ottawa dentist mourns wife killed in Mexico

By Tom Spears, The Ottawa Citizen July 4, 2011



- [Story](#)
- [Photos \(1 \)](#)



Judy Baylis, right, seen here with her daughter, Lindsay, was found dead Monday night in Mexico.

Photograph by: Family photo, .

OTTAWA — An Ottawa dentist whose wife was murdered in Mexico last week is waiting at the couple's home there while police investigate what they believe to be a violent robbery.

Judy Baylis, 64, was found dead in the house she has shared for many years with her husband, John Baylis, in the central Mexican town of San Miguel.

Dr. Baylis was in Ottawa when the crime took place.

On Saturday he said the police have little doubt about why and how his wife was killed.

“It was a robbery but I think she recognized the person, and then the person murdered her,” he said. “It was a very violent murder. It was horrible.”

The Correo newspaper in San Miguel reports that police say she was stabbed 23 times. A knife believed to be the murder weapon was found near the house.

“It’s somebody local but we don’t know who it is,” Dr. Baylis said.

“The police have been in. They’ve taken footprints, so they know the person was not that tall. They know how big they were, and how they entered the house and that sort of thing.

“It was in the night and I think she woke up. But the person knew the outline of the house so I think it was an inside job. He knew his way around in the dark, knew where to go.”

The attacker may also have been a woman, he said.

The murder was Monday night, and he flew to Mexico Wednesday.

At first he was not allowed into the house. Police had posted a guard at the door to make sure no one touched the crime scene. Police also took her computer to check any recent communications she had.

There were usually servants at the house, but police have told reporters in San Miguel that Judy Baylis was alone the night of the murder. Her husband said the house was locked, and police believe it was difficult for the robber to break in.

A maid found her body the next day.

Dr. Baylis calls the neighbourhood “fabulous. We never ever locked our doors for years. But it seems like the place has become more violent. Even the police said things have changed. They asked me if we had a security system (but) we never needed one.

In recent years “there’s so much unemployment and there’s desperation” among local people, he said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said Saturday that authorities were aware of a Canadian death near San Miguel, and that consular officials in Mexico City were working with local authorities. No further information was provided.

The Baylises have been travelling to San Miguel for many years. Judy Baylis in recent years has been spending most of the year there, travelling back to Canada for the summers; Dr. Baylis has travelled back and forth through the year, while working as a dentist in Ottawa.

Most of the couple’s possessions have been moved to Mexico over the years.

“I only have a small apartment in Ottawa,” he said.

The couple have been married 39 years, and have three grown children in Ottawa and British Columbia.

Their Mexican house is in a small city in the centre of the country, far inland from the beaches that get the mass tourism. The eight-bedroom, nine-bathroom house “is too big for me,” he said. But it was a good place to have their daughter’s wedding in 2010, with 90 guests. It has stables and a swimming pool.

San Miguel is a favourite place for foreigners because of its mild climate 2,000 metres up in the hills, and its music, theatre, art and good restaurants.

Foreign Affairs recommends that Canadians in Mexico should “exercise a high degree of caution.” It says the area near the U.S. border is especially dangerous because of shootings by gangs smuggling drugs across the border.

But even in the rest of Mexico it warns that “high levels of criminal activity, as well as occasional demonstrations and protests, remain a concern throughout the country.”

It says there is “a deteriorating security situation in many parts of the country.”

Dr. Baylis’s recent days in Mexico have been filled with dealing with the police, and with friends and family at home.

“I spent one day about six and a half hours at the police station. They called in everybody, and everybody has to sit and wait and give statements. They’re very thorough,” he said.

Crime scene experts have been going through the house and taking fingerprints as well.


“The police showed me the footprints, and they’re very clear.”

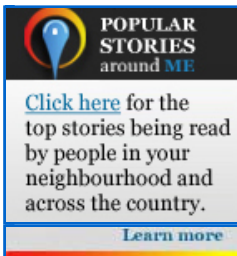
Judy Baylis had dual Canadian and British citizenship. The British High Commission has sent a letter of condolence and Canadian Foreign Affairs officials have been closely involved with the Mexican police from the early stages of the investigation.

Dr. Baylis has had his wife’s body cremated, and is now considering whether to bring the ashes to Canada or bury them in San Miguel.

“She loved this place,” he said.

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