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Calgary couple drown in Mexico after rogue wave sweeps them away

Article

Published On Fri Feb 4 2011

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Facebook profile photo of Linda McDougall-Beatty, Calgary woman who was swept away by rogue wave in Mexico.

FACEBOOK PHOTO

Curtis Rush
Staff Reporter

Dale McDougall, 63, and his wife Linda, 54, were looking forward to their trip to Mexico.

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It was a chance to spend time with their daughter Teri Miller, son-in-law Daryl and their three grandchildren, Brandon, Christopher and Kyle. Brandon was about to celebrate a birthday.

The excitement was building on Jan. 28 when Linda posted this on her Facebook page: "4 more sleeps and MEXICO, whoot, whoot."

A friend of Teri's wished them well, with a warning that seems haunting now because of what happened a few days later.

Said the friend: "Have fun guys. Stay outta trouble."

On Thursday, the Calgary couple would end up dead, swept away by a rogue wave in the Mexican tourist town of Cabo San Lucas.

They had checked in Tuesday to the Hotel Riu Santa Fe with their daughter, son-in-law and three grandchildren for a week's vacation. One of the grandchildren was about to celebrate a birthday.

Dale headed up the parts and service department at Calgary auto dealer, Metro Ford, where he worked for the past 25 years. His wife was a certified dog trainer and volunteered at dog rescue shelters.

Risks were all around the couple at the resort town, described as the jewel of the Baja California Sur.

Divorce Beach is notorious for its strong currents and severe riptides. It's so dangerous that travel advisories urge beach-goers to walk a short distance to the calmer waters of Lover's Beach on the harbour.

It's not clear if the family knew about the risks.

What is clear, however, is that the family members were surprised by a rogue wave as they walked the beach.

Everyone, except for Daryl, was pulled into the Pacific Ocean currents.

But Dale and the grandchildren, the youngest of whom was 12 or 13, were able to get out and get back to shore. However, Dale returned to the water to help his wife, who was having difficulty.

The couple soon disappeared under the waves.

"They were all standing on the beach holding hands and a rogue wave came and swept them all up," their daughter-in-law, Rebbekka McFadden, told the Calgary Herald. "Linda started to drown and Dale started to try and get her. Unfortunately, neither of them could get out," said McFadden, who is married to the McDougalls' son, Jason.

Family members waved down nearby boats, one of which took Linda aboard.

Paramedics at a nearby beach started resuscitation, but Linda was later declared dead at a local hospital.

Authorities say the Mexican Navy pulled Dale's body from the ocean.

The owner of the family-run business, Reg Pattermore, told *the Toronto Star* that everyone is "shocked" by the tragedy and also by the circumstances.

"I've known Dale as a very close friend and a mentor in many ways for 25 years," Pattermore said. "Foolish would not be a word you would use to describe Dale. He would not take risks with his wife and grandchildren. They've been married for many years. He's not a risk-taker."

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Pattimore has instructed his managers that if people need personal time to take it and offered grief counselling.

With files from Kathleen Power

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