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## Congresswoman's son-in-law dies snorkeling

August 12, 2009 4:29 PM | 6 Comments | [UPDATED STORY](#)

The son-in-law of U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) died Sunday in a snorkeling accident as he vacationed in Mexico with his family, her office and family said.

Michael McLaughlin, 38, was with Schakowsky and other family members near Tulum, Mexico, at the beginning of a week long vacation, Schakowsky's husband Robert Creamer said.

McLaughlin was married to Lauren, 35, who is the daughter of Schakowsky's husband and his previous wife Day Piercy, who lives in New York.

McLaughlin was a filmmaker and editor who lived with his wife in Queens, N.Y.



Michael McLaughlin (family handout)

Creamer said he and other family members were in their hotel near Solinon Bay when another guest with binoculars told them there appeared to be a problem with McLaughlin, who was snorkeling in the bay about 7 miles north of Tulum.

Creamer was the first to reach McLaughlin in a kayak. He said he found his son-in-law face down in the water, and called out to him but got no response. Creamer said he got closer, turned his son-in-law over and realized he was in trouble. He administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and put a life vest on him, Creamer said.

"I yelled at him and poked at him and got no response, so I turned him over and it was clear he wasn't breathing," said Creamer.

McLaughlin's wife then showed up along with Schakowsky and others in more kayaks to help put McLaughlin on a kayak in the nearly 7-foot of water. Others also arrived in more kayaks to assist and pulled the craft carrying McLaughlin onto the beach where they continued to try to revive him unsuccessfully.

McLaughlin was pronounced dead at a local hospital a short time later, Creamer said.

In a phone interview from Mexico, Creamer said McLaughlin was an experienced snorkeler and diver who liked to snorkel alone. a coroner's report said he had aspirated in his mask and died of asphyxiation, he said.

McLaughlin was cremated, following his own request, Creamer said.

Creamer described himself as heartbroken and praised his son-in-law and the 7-year marriage to his daughter. The couple had planned to adopt their first child in September.

"Michael was one of the most loving and creative people I've ever met. ... and he and my daughter Lauren had one of the most loving marriages I have ever seen," Creamer said.

In 2005 Schakowsky's daughter-in-law Fiona died of cancer. She had been married to Schakowsky's son Ian.

Born Oct. 26, 1970, in Berkeley, Calif., McLaughlin was the oldest of three children and grew up in "the shadow of Mount Tamalpais, in Marin County," according to Creamer.

As a young man, McLaughlin was known for his love for the outdoors as his dinner table quips that entertained his family. As a young adult, he attended Sarah Lawrence College where he studied theater and moved with a friend to New York City, following college.

His family said McLaughlin never lost his zest for adventure, regularly white water rafting, skydiving, backpacking and studying Karate.

McLaughlin later moved to San Francisco, where he met his wife Lauren and married her in July 2002. During their marriage, McLaughlin helped his wife start her own business and she helped him pursue his film career as a filmmaker, his family said.

During McLaughlin's career he worked in live theater, puppetry and short fiction. His short film "Shadow Puppets of Doom" was shown in film festivals and won the "Best Screenplay" award in the Marin County Film Festival, his family said. At the time of his death he was filming a pilot reality television show.

McLaughlin is survived by his wife, Lauren Creamer McLaughlin, his mother, Rohana, his sister, Halima, and his brother, Marlin.

Tribune reporter Will Lee contributed.

--Carlos Sadovi

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**From Edison/Norwood Park** on August 12, 2009 10:33 AM  
My condolences to the families affected.

I am very sorry for the tragedies that have affected the Schakowsky family; She is my congresswoman, I support her political career, and I am looking forward to her upcoming town hall meeting at Niles West high school.

**John** on August 12, 2009 10:53 AM

Sounds very strange that an experienced snorkeler (and diver, no less), would die by inhaling water while practicing this mostly benign activity. I wonder if he had a heart attack or some other health problem that caused this to happen. And if he's already been cremated, I guess no one will ever know the facts. Very sad. Sympathy to the family.

**Rosana Hart** on August 12, 2009 3:23 PM

I am an old friend of Michael's mother and have so many lovely memories of Michael as a child. He had that exceptionally loving quality then too. I hadn't seen him in years, glad to hear he kept that open heart all the way through. So sorry he is gone.

**Greg B** on August 12, 2009 4:11 PM

My condolences to the Schakowsky/Creamer families. I can't believe posters on this thread are taking the opportunity to use this young man's death to make political pokes at the Congresswoman. Have some respect. A man is dead. I'm quite certain at this point that Rep. Schakowsky is more concerned with her family than the polls.

**bobby ward** on August 12, 2009 11:30 PM

I personally don't know the family but, anytime someone lose a love one it's heartbreaking. Therefore, my condolences go out to the Schakowsky family.

**Hilary Greer** on August 17, 2009 12:45 PM

I am so sorry for your loss. I went to college with Michael and he was a bright and wonderful guy.

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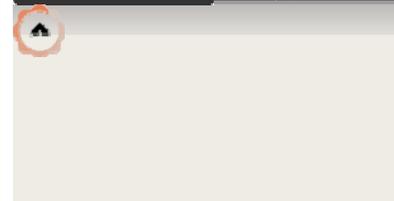
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