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Wife of TV producer found dead in Cancun

Bruce Beresford-Redman, his wife, Monica, and their two children were to return from the resort town on Thursday -- her 42nd birthday. Instead, he remains in Mexico answering questions about her death.

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April 09, 2010 | By Kate Linthicum and Cecila Sanchez

Reporting from Los Angeles and Mexico City — Bruce Beresford-Redman, a successful reality TV producer, and his wife, Monica, the owner of a popular Westside nightclub, left Los Angeles with their two children last week for a resort in Cancun, Mexico.

Family members say the couple were trying to repair a marriage that had been fraying in recent months. Monica Beresford-Redman had recently discovered that her husband had had an affair, relatives say.

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The pair were scheduled to come home Thursday -- Monica's 42nd birthday. Instead, Bruce Beresford-Redman spent the day answering questions from Mexican police.

His wife's body was found Thursday morning in a sewer at the resort where they were staying. Mexican prosecutors said it appears she was strangled.

Beresford-Redman, who police have detained for questioning, has not been charged in connection with his wife's death.

Authorities say Beresford-Redman had scratch marks on his neck. The hotel staff reported seeing the couple quarrel in a "violent" manner on Sunday, and several guests told police they heard arguing coming from the couple's room Monday night. Authorities said an autopsy indicated that Monica Beresford-Redman died Monday night.

The Emmy-nominated producer, best known for his work on two hit reality shows -- MTV's "Pimp My Ride" and CBS' "Survivor" -- reported his wife missing on Tuesday. He told Mexican police he last saw her at 10 a.m. Monday, when she left their hotel to go shopping.

On Wednesday, he told KCAL 9 News in Los Angeles that he was optimistic about the search. "I'm very hopeful someone will find my wife very soon," he said. "She still hasn't been located, and we're looking."

The couple met in the late 1990s at Zabumba Bar & Restaurant, which Monica opened in 1994 with her sister, Carla Burgos. The Brazilian eatery and nightclub is known for its salsa, reggae and bossa nova nights.

The pair had different personalities -- Monica was an extrovert who loved parties, Bruce was quieter. They came from very different backgrounds -- she was born in Rio de Janeiro and he grew up in New Jersey. But they immediately fell for each other, Burgos said.

In the beginning, Monica supported Bruce financially, Burgos said. "He had this really old car, he didn't have any money," she said.

But in recent years, Beresford-Redman found a great deal of success in reality TV. He worked closely with Mark Burnett, the executive producer behind CBS' hit "Survivor." Beresford-Redman helped produce the fourth, sixth and eighth seasons of the show.

With longtime friend Rick Hurvitz, Beresford-Redman went on to create "Pimp My Ride," a reality hit about car restoration that ran on MTV from 2004 to 2007. "Pimp My Ride" was broadcast in more than 100 countries and at one time was the network's highest-rated show internationally.

By that time, the couple had married and had two children. In 2007, they bought a \$2-million home in Rancho Palos Verdes, with a big backyard and a pool. Neighbors said they seemed happy. On Thursday, an Easter wreath hung on the front door.

The trip to Cancun, Burgos said, was designed to fix a marriage that had been strained three months ago, when her sister learned her husband had been having an affair. She said They had been talking about a divorce.

He said the affair "was a mistake, and that he loved her and wanted to be with her," Burgos said. She agreed to try to work things out. "She really loved him and wanted to give him a chance," Burgos said.

Burgos said she last spoke to her sister Sunday night and sounded normal.

While their father is detained in Mexico, Burgos said the Beresford-Redman children would be flown back to the United States.

kate.linthicum@latimes.com

Times staff writers Jeff Gottlieb in Rancho Palos Verdes and Scott Collins and Martha Groves in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

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