



Donna and Lanny Dean died Sunday when their sightseeing bus crashed in the jungle between Cancun and Chichen Itza. Lanny was Minister at Erindale United Church and his wife was going to start a new job as a Canadian Red Cross fundraiser upon their return.

Family, friends, church parishioners mourn couple killed in bus accident

By STEVE PECAR
Staff Reporter

Friends and family members of Lanny and Donna Dean admit the tragedy of the Mississauga couple's death hasn't yet fully sunk in, but agree it is difficult to imagine a world without them.

Gathered at Erindale United Church Monday evening, the congregation struggled with the fact that Rev. Dean and his wife were the subject of their service instead of looking to him to provide words of comfort as he had done so many times in the past.

The Deans died in a fiery bus crash Sunday in Mexico just a day after arriving in the resort town of Cancun for a short holiday.

They were among 25 people believed killed in the accident, including two other Canadians.

There were 13 Canadian passengers among the 52 people on board the bus.

Lanny, 44, had served at Erindale for three years. Donna, 47, was about to begin a new job as a fundraiser for the Canadian Red Cross after recently leaving the post of director for the Canadian Cancer Society.

"It was a last minute trip before Donna started her new job," said close friend and chairman of the board for the church Liz Gorman. "Lanny had some holiday time available and they thought it would be a good opportunity to be together because they were always so busy."

Ironically, it was the attraction of ancient Chichen Itza, where majestic Mayan pyramids stand, that took the Deans off the beaten track from the popular vacation spot.

Gorman said it wouldn't be like the Deans to

just sit back in the sun. Rather, she said, they liked to look around and see what an area had to offer.

Located in the Yucatan region of Mexico, Chichen Itza is best reached by bus but means a long trek through jungle under not always favorable weather and road conditions.

Survivors of the accident say the road was wet and the driver was moving at high speeds.

Other reports indicate the driver tried to pass another vehicle but lost control, sending the bus rolling before it crashed and exploded upon impact with a power transformer.

Walter Sowa, another close friend, told reporters Monday the Deans were a wonderful couple who enjoyed life and being with people.

"They were full of vitality and enthusiasm,"

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Sowa said. "They always looked for cause to celebrate."

Gorman said that although Lanny hadn't been at Erindale United for a long time, he initiated a number of successful campaigns including a faith festival and a job search program that helped people who were out of work get back on their feet.

"He really was a fabulous person — they both were," Gorman said. "They were totally committed to helping others."

The couple are survived by their only child, Stephanie Judge-Dean, 25.

Late yesterday, a spokesman for the federal department of external affairs said Canadian representatives in Mexico were at the crash site to assist Canadians there who survived the accident.

Jeffrey Chapman said it is likely Mexican police will investigate the incident to determine its cause but that Canada could officially ask for a probe if it is felt the results are unsatisfactory.

"So far there is nothing to indicate the investigation will not be handled properly," Chapman said.

A relative of the Deans said it has not been determined when the bodies would be returned to Canada.

Family members will receive visitors at Erindale United Church tomorrow from 7 to 9:30 p.m.

A memorial service will be held Friday at 7 p.m.