

Bay of Plenty Times

Walter Crosa's tragic death

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Walter Crosa, father of five, died at the Port of Tauranga.

Most mornings Walter Crosa would share a cup of South American herbal tea with his wife Robyn.

It was a ritual for the Tauranga couple and afterwards he would say "see you later, have a good day" before heading out the door for work.

But on the morning of Monday, August 15, Mrs Crosa was still asleep and they didn't share their drink.

All she heard was the door close.

She never got a chance to say goodbye.

And she never saw him alive again.

Walter Daniel Crosa, father of five, died that day after a grader struck him while he was tarsealing at the Port of Tauranga. It happened eight days before his 50th birthday. The tragedy has devastated his family and friends.

Nearly two weeks on from that fateful day, Mrs Crosa has spoken publicly for the first time about her loss in an exclusive interview with the Bay of Plenty Times Weekend.

A large photo of Walter Crosa sits on a table in the Welcome Bay family's dining room surrounded by bouquets of flowers and cards of tribute. Other photos of the family, wife Robyn and children Daniel 18, Graciela 16, Jazmin 13, Michel 11, and Javier 7, show happy times together.

Mrs Crosa tells her story as young Javier plays nearby.

She talks of their morning ritual of drinking herbal tea, or mate, as it is known in Mr Crosa's native Argentina.

"I never imagined that would be the last time Walter would be with us."

Mrs Crosa went out during the day and arrived home to find a police car outside their home.

"A policeman approached, he looked serious. I felt it was something serious, but he had a very caring attitude.

"He asked me if I was Robyn Crosa and were there children inside. They were, so we stood outside. He told me Walter had been in a terrible accident at the port."

Mrs Crosa breaks down as she remembers the moment.

"I hoped it was a little accident. But he told me Walter had died. I wished it wasn't true, but I knew it was. The first thing I thought was: How am I going to tell the children?"

She is a strong woman. It is her faith that gives her strength and she wipes away her tears and continues.

"I flashed back to that morning when I hadn't drunk tea with him.

"Then I reflected, we'd had the perfect family weekend. Michel won his football game. Daniel's team won and got through to the semifinals. Jazmin played netball and we had a girls' night out at Global Connexions."

Mr Crosa had a boys' night out with his son Daniel and his mates and watched the David Tua fight.

"We'd all had a perfect night," Mrs Crosa smiles.

"On Sunday, Walter and I had a date. It was very rare the two of us could take time out together because we have a big family. We went to see Daniel's coach and sat in the sun talking about football.

"Walter, in true fashion, gave the coach a Boca cap, he liked to give things to people.

"Then we bought chorizo sausages and shared them with three Argentinians from Daniel's football team. It's an Argentinian tradition, sharing, talking and being together. It was a surreal weekend, it was gorgeous."

Mr Crosa grew up playing football, learning martial arts, and represented Argentina in Tae Kwon Do. In 1981, he joined the Unification Church in Buenos Aires and as a missionary spent a year each in Uruguay and Brazil, then three years in Italy and various other European countries.

Eight years later he met Robyn, also a missionary, just three days before their blessing marriage.

"When I met Walter, I really liked his perfect Italian nose. He was a handsome, strong-looking guy. If only he could remember my name. He kept calling me sister, until I got annoyed.

"We were married and our journey began. The times we were apart for different reasons, Walter always wrote to me regularly, always told me he loved me, and what he was doing," Mrs Crosa smiles.

Tragic death: 'We never got the chance to say goodbye'

The couple had Daniel while living in New Zealand, then moved to Argentina where three more children were born. The family moved to New Zealand in 2002.

"We were immediately embraced by my family, our church and the Welcome Bay Baptist Church," Mrs Crosa says.

Mr Crosa began work as a cleaner, but after a while found a new occupation in road construction, and latterly with Allied Workforce.

"He loved where he was working and he loved his crew, his 'bros' and I know they loved him."

Mr Crosa coached an 11th grade Waipuna Football Club team.

"He taught 'his boys' a new word, MAC - Maturity, Attitude and Concentration," Mrs Crosa explains, adding he often refreshed their memory about it.

More recently, he was assistant coach to the Tauranga City Bay 1 team.

"Walter had a coaching style all of his own and his greatest wish was to pass on his extensive knowledge of the sport to see his young team grow to one day become all that they could be and perhaps even represent their country in the sport that he loved," Crawford Simpson, president of Waipuna Football Club, said.

Mr Crosa was also a true family man. "Working and providing for his family, watching his sons become great guys and sports people and his daughters, beautiful girls, made him proud.

"Knowing Walter as we do, he will be moving all over the place - in spirit - doing what he does best."

Mrs Crosa wants to thank everyone who has supported the family in their time of grief.

"We'll all miss Walter, but we had a fulfilling life. South Americans love family and I am so grateful for that. We weren't rich, but we were rich in family.

"Because of our faith, it is not the end for us and Walter is still with us."



Robyn Crosa and her children Graciela, Michel, Jazmin, Daniel and Javier - by Joel Ford.