

King of the road:
Normand and
Andrea on his
Harley Davidson

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L'ORÉAL
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It's an unbearable tragedy — a loving couple, on holiday, killed by a freak accident. What's even more heartbreaking is the fact that US tourists Normand Larose and Joy Few knew this could be their last big trip together...

IT was supposed to be the trip of a lifetime. A journey to Ireland to visit the place of their ancestry, to see the fabled beauty spots that for years had simply been in their imaginations. Instead, it was a trip that ended in tragedy, with a freak accident causing the deaths of loving couple Normand Larose, 62, and Joy Few, 64.

And what makes it all the more harrowing is that Normand Larose was suffering from a deteriorating health condition which could soon have made travelling impossible, his ex-girlfriend has revealed. But in the cruellest twist of fate, he died on Monday alongside his partner when their horse got spooked during a traditional jarvey tour of the Gap of Dunloe in Kerry, throwing them into a rock-strewn ravine.

Speaking exclusively to the Irish Daily Mail from her home in Phoenix, Arizona, Normand's ex-girlfriend Andrea Silven paid tribute to the man who was still close to her grandchildren.

Andrea, 59, dated Normand for 10 years before he met Joy and told her the kind-hearted biker was still very close to her teenage grandson Devyn. They had seen him just before he left for Europe 10 days previously.

'He's like a grandfather to my grandson because when we lived together my grandson was a baby and Norm was like Grandpapa,' Andrea says. 'He's always been that way. Devyn's 16 now, he grew up with him. He got together with Devyn right before they left. They hung out together for the day.'

'He was supposed to come and see him when they got back.'

But Normand never came home, and Devyn has since learnt the devastating news that he will never

EXCLUSIVE
by Hugo
Daniel

in Phoenix, Arizona.

left — the holiday was his first big journey out of the States. Joy Few, it seems, felt the same, sending a pal a Facebook message declaring her love for Ireland just days before her shock death, saying, 'I love it here, I'd like to come back'.

'This was like the first really big trip I think he'd been on, out of North America and going to Europe, he'd never been there,' Andrea says. 'It was a big trip. He was Facebooking pictures.'

'I knew they were in Scotland, I think they flew into Heathrow and from there they were going up into Scotland and over to Ireland.'

'He loves to see architecture. He was loving it, he said it was beautiful the areas they were going to, old castles, you don't see that here.'

Andrea never met Joy but says Norm seemed very happy with her.

'I feel so bad for them,' she says. 'I never would have expected something like this. You would never think when you're on vacation — going to see all these beautiful places. It is such a shock.'

Andrea, who works as a nurse aide at her local hospital, spoke to the Mail from the home she shares with her daughter Aubrey Lewis, 35, who is mother to Devyn, 16, and a 20-month-old daughter, Cali.

In what seems a tragic irony now, Andrea explains Norm had almost pulled out of the trip to Ireland because of his health.

'For a minute there they weren't sure they were going to go because of the health issues,' she says.

'He was back and forth to the hospital, they weren't sure they were going to make it. I guess he felt better and well enough to get out and do it and did it, and that sucks that it ended like that.'

'It was his bucket-lister I guess, his one last hurrah,' Andrea says.'

But telling her grandchild that his beloved Grandpapa was gone was a difficult moment for the family.

'I just told Devyn and he said he's

'He was fighting some serious health issues'

see his Grandpapa again.

Andrea explains that Normand suffered from Hepatitis C and cirrhosis of the liver and felt this would probably be his last chance to travel far. But nobody could have predicted the finality of this journey.

'He was fighting some health issues. He had Hepatitis C and cirrhosis of the liver, eventually it gets to a point where it won't... it just progresses,' says Andrea.

She adds: 'It was a bucket list type trip. It's really sad. Because the health issues he had are pretty serious. This was like something you would do, to kind of see everything before you get too sick to do anything.'

Although he had been fighting ill-health for years, Andrea says Normand was beginning to suffer from the effects of his illness.

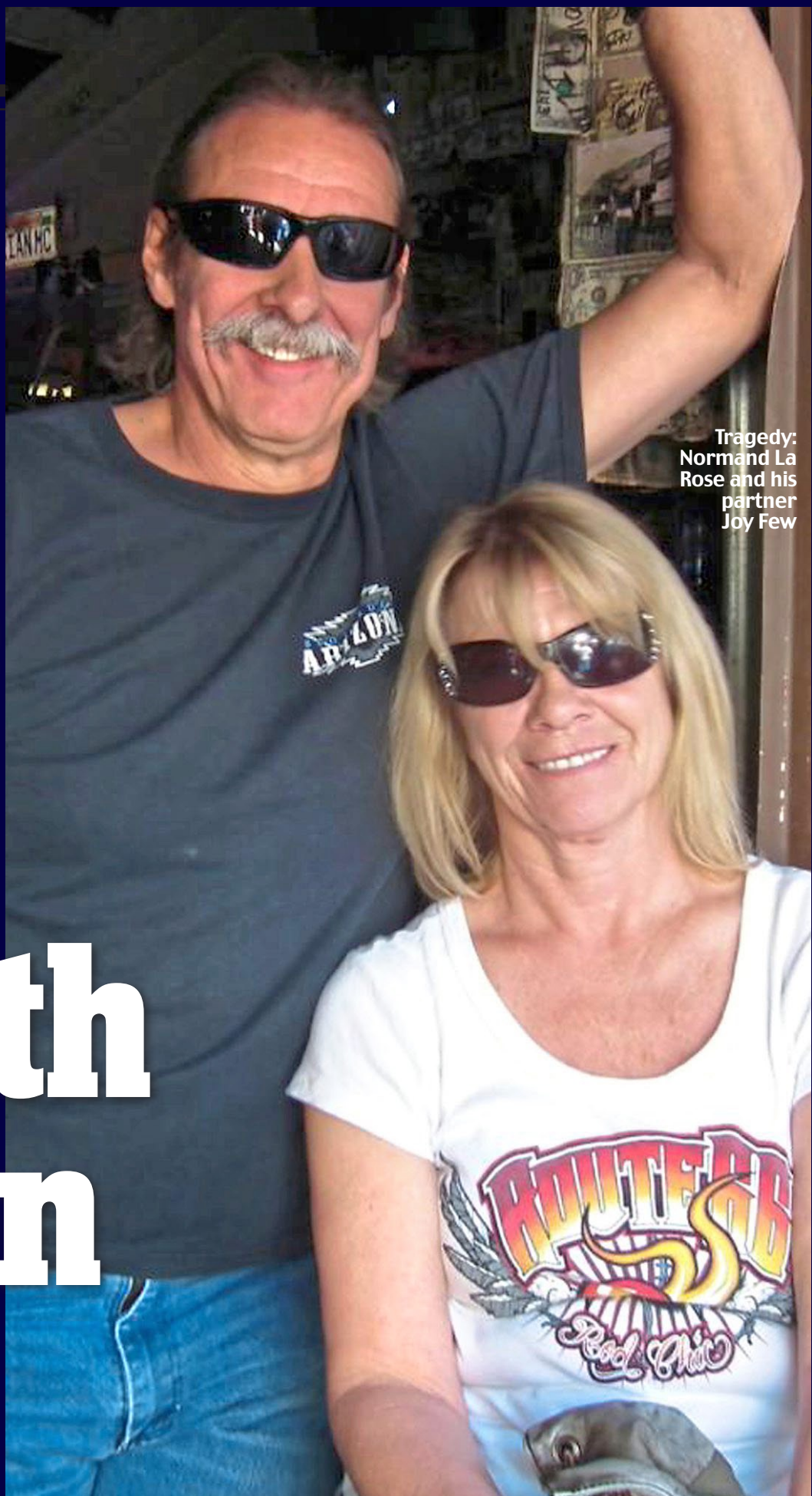
'He was starting to feel it,' she adds. 'He had been fighting it for a long time.'

'He had it when we got together, he had been going to treatments, they were trying things but there wasn't anything that was good enough to knock it out.'

Andrea says 'Norm' was so excited about the trip in the days before he

Normand Larose was enjoying a trip in Kerry as a long illness was slowly destroying his health, his ex-girlfriend reveals...

'He died in a place that he loved, with the person he loved'



Tragedy: Normand Larose and his partner Joy Few



Mourning: (left) Normand's ex Andrea Silven and her daughter Aubrey Lewis, (right) Normand with Aubrey's son Devyn



glad that he died in a place that he loved, with the person he loved,' Andrea says.

'He loved Devyn, loved to go off and hang out with him, they were buds. They would go to a lot of car shows.'

Andrea fondly remembers how Normand loved sports, such as golf and hockey, and was 'very adventurous'.

'He loved his motorcycles, loved to go on his bike runs. He was a goofball,' she says, remembering

happier times. Normand worked as a carpenter for a local company called Adobe Drywall.

Originally from Magog, Quebec, he was only able to speak his native French when he first moved to Arizona but managed to teach himself English by watching US TV shows.

'He came down here, didn't speak a word of English,' Andrea explains.

'He spoke French. He rented a small room downtown and tried to get odd labour jobs. And finally he learned English by watching Wheel of Fortune.'

'He worked his way up from there, started in construction, then as a carpenter,' she says proudly of her ex-partner's not inconsiderable achievements.

And she remembers how they met, supporting rival Canadian hockey teams while sitting across the bar from each other at their local pizza place.

'I used to go and watch hockey games there after work and he was sitting on the other side of the bar and the Maple Leaves were beat-

ing his team the Montreal Canadiens,' she says. 'So we started hanging out together. I was 40 and he was 42.'

'We hit it off, we had a lot of things in common. Quebec is a lot more European, my grandfather had grown up in Belgium so he spoke French fluently.'

'We would listen to old French folk songs together. We went up to

'He had a heart of gold. He was a good guy'

Quebec and he showed me Old Quebec City, the architecture there is just like old Europe.'

The couple used to love going on motorbike trips together. Andrea proudly shows a photo of them sitting on a Harley Davidson Road King during a road trip up to British Colombia and down through

Idaho and Wyoming together in 2007.

She also has a picture of Norm as a young man in a wooden heart-shaped frame that he made her.

'I still love him,' she explains with sadness in her voice.

'He was kind of rough around the edges but a big teddy bear.'

'I mean, he had a heart of gold, would do anything for anybody. He mellowed out in his old age. He was a good guy.'

'He's been through so much. But at least he's had some happy times.'

'I always half way expected to hear the phone ring and say he died in a motorcycle accident.'

Instead, Normand's life ended suddenly in a moment when he was breathing in the fresh countryside air, with the woman he loved at his side.

Tomorrow Normand and Joy will travel back to the States with her family, side by side in death as they were in life. He is survived by younger brothers, Gatton, Yvan and Fern who all live in Canada, and two nieces and a nephew.