

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE, Monday, August 7, 1978

Body found in Willowbrook believed to be missing nurse

By MARC DAVIS

The decomposed body of a woman, believed to be a nurse at the Staten Island Developmental Center missing for more than two weeks, was found yesterday buried in a wooded area a few hundred yards behind the state Institute for Basic Research on Forest Hill Rd., Willowbrook.

Police last night refused to give the condition of the body, except to say it had been buried "some time" and showed "no apparent cause of death."

A Brooklyn medical examiner will perform an autopsy today to determine how the woman died. Police said they hope to identify the body this afternoon.

Shin Lee, a 44-year-old nurse, was reported missing July 20 and last seen that day walking home from Building 11 of the center toward her Sea View home. Police said Mrs. Lee always walked home through that wooded area after completing her 3-to-11:45 p.m. shift.

About 30 friends of the Korean immigrant yesterday searched the woods around the center's main building for about an hour before one of them found the body in a shallow, recently dug grave at 4 p.m.

Nicholas Lee, head of the Staten Island Korean Catholic Apostolate and not related to the nurse, said Mrs. Lee's friends were frustrated by the police's lack of success in finding the body after 17 days and decided to conduct their own search of the area.

"We felt the police were negligent," Lee said. "I've been contacting the missing persons squad every day and they never had anything. I thought that was ridiculous, so we searched ourselves."

Police said they conducted a number of searches around the area in the last two weeks, but did not know why they had not discovered the body. The searches were conducted by foot and by

helicopter, police said.

"Some of the searches had gone right by that area several times," said Lt. William Juliano, head of the detective squad. "The excess rain of this week may have loosened the dirt and helped uncover the body."

Besides police searches, Mrs. Lee's husband, Jun-ho, and a few friends had searched the area several times earlier with no success. Nicholas Lee said he personally contacted many members of the Korean community, as well as several local ministers, for a massive search yesterday.

Many members of yesterday's search party were members of the Korean Church of Staten Island, including South Shore resident Jaido Kim who eventually found the body.

"We gathered in front of the building at 3 p.m. and then spread out," Lee said. "Someone came late and was looking for us in the woods when he found the mound of dirt. It was the body."

The police apparently were alerted to the discovered body by a phone call from the Advance after Nicholas Lee phoned the paper. Police arrived on the scene about 6 p.m. and removed the body two hours later.

Although police would not positively identify the body, they noted it was approximately the same size and age as the missing nurse.

Mrs. Lee, described by friends as "very diligent" and "very family-oriented, reportedly had received a death threat several months ago from a co-worker in her building who had been fired after Mrs. Lee gave her a negative work evaluation.

Mr. and Mrs. Lee and their three children, Mi-jong, 16; Su-jong, 18, and Won-ki, 13, came to Staten Island from Korea in May 1971. On the night she disappeared, Mr. Lee and his children were in Brooklyn near his grocery store.

They returned home two days later, on July 22, when they noticed and reported the disappearance. News of Mrs. Lee's disappearance "shocked the whole Korean community on Staten Island," Nicholas Lee said.

Staten Island District Attorney Thomas R. Sullivan spoke with the nurse's husband and a few of her friends at the scene last night, but refused to say if there were any suspects in the case.

Police ask that anyone with information about the body or Mrs. Lee contact them at 987-7935. All conversations will be kept confidential, police said.

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