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As dusk arrives, Kenneth Schweiger creeps furtively into the dense woods that surround the old Willowbrook institution on Staten Island.

Long into the night—using skills he learned in Vietnam—he stands perfectly still and utterly alone, staring into the darkness and listening intently for the sound of any movement.

He prays for any sign of his daughter, Jennifer Lyn.

The 12-year-old child, afflicted with Down's syndrome, was last seen 17 days ago when, bursting with trust and smiling, she walked into the woods clutching the hand of a vagrant.

Since then scores of volunteers and police, aided by scent-hunting dogs, hi-tech equipment and even the divinations of psychics, have vainly searched Willowbrook's largely deserted grounds and the eerie tunnels that form a labyrinth beneath the 385-acre campus.

### Beyond exhaustion

Driven beyond exhaustion by a broken heart, Schweiger has hunted obsessively for as much as 20 hours a day.

"You never know when she might come out of these woods if she gets loose or whatever," Schweiger said as he walked through the woods last week. "I get a feeling about a certain spot and I'll just stand there and just watch."

His eyes panned the dusk as he made his way through the trees, breaking off the

beaten path to peer into holes or kick at freshly turned dirt.

"Hopefully, somebody'll slip up and maybe drop something, you know," he said. "Like, I've gone through the tunnel 10 times, and on the 11th time all of a sudden I see something and say, 'Hey, that wasn't there yesterday.'"

### Eerie grounds

Schweiger is convinced the secret of his daughter's disappearance is concealed somewhere on the sprawling, often eerie grounds of Willowbrook, a largely empty institution for the mentally retarded that is haunted by the memory of residents whose gross maltreatment became a national scandal.

Schweiger and police also believe the key to what happened to Jennifer may be locked in the mind of a former Willowbrook aide—said to be mildly retarded and perhaps schizophrenic—who returned to live for years at a tidy encampment in the woods that ring the institution.

The man, said to have used

## Area of hunt gets wider

The massive search for 12-year-old Jennifer Schweiger shifted from Willowbrook Park in Staten Island to a nearby residential neighborhood yesterday.

A search party composed of police and scores of civilian volunteers combed Jewett and Kemball Aves. in Castleton Corners, located about a mile northeast from the sprawling 385-acre Willowbrook complex where the youngster was last seen July 9 walking with a vagrant.

"The area is dotted with wooded areas and small parks—places where a child could be taken to," said a volunteer manning the phones at a temporary headquarters set up by police after the disappearance.

—Ruben Rosario

several aliases, including Frank Bruchette, was taken into police custody the day after Jennifer disappeared. Under escort, he was brought to his camp, bundled up his belongings and was led away.

A dozen witnesses saw a man fitting Bruchette's description walking with Jennifer in the two miles between her house and the Willowbrook grounds, ambling conspicuously with the little girl along main streets before slipping into the woods with her.

But sources said that under lengthy questioning Bruchette disavowed any knowledge of Jennifer. Police wonder: Is he telling the truth? Is he lying? Or is his mind so confused he doesn't know the difference?

### Dogs picked up scent

In the days after Jennifer vanished, specially trained dogs picked up her scent

near a Willowbrook building about 50 feet from Bruchette's campsite. But the dogs picked up no trace in the camp itself, a small area cut out of the woods with a military-style trench latrine and a bed covered by a rain-proof canopy.

Standing there last week, Schweiger gazed into a 5-foot-deep, 3-foot-wide hole dug cleanly into the earth. "That'd be about Jennifer's height, maybe a little deeper," he said.

To walk with Schweiger is to wander in a nightmare.

All but a handful of Willowbrook's 50 buildings—most of them two-story, red-brick structures with sloping roofs—are abandoned, overgrown with ivy and choked with weeds. Swing sets, slides and carousels sit rusting in play yards.

Inside the buildings, paint

Page 2  
of 5