

SEARCH

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peels from the walls. But in some there are rows of beds and running water, reminders that 6,200 severely retarded children and adults once lived there in conditions that moved a nation when they were exposed on television in the early 1970s.

Tunnels & passageways

Beneath the streets, Willowbrook's empty buildings are connected by easily accessible steam tunnels and dark passageways.

Assistant Chief Samuel Marino, heading the police search for Jennifer, refused to discuss Bruchette, reveal his true name, or even confirm officially that he is the same man who disappeared into the woods with her.

Marino acknowledged only that a vagrant had been questioned, but not detained. He said the man is not in custody, but that police know where he is.

But sources involved in the investigation said a picture of the man taken into custody and distributed to detectives was identified by long-time Willowbrook employes as that of Bruchette.

Other sources said Bruchette has used various aliases, apparently served in the Navy and may have split time between an undisclosed location in New Jersey and his Willowbrook camp. Willowbrook records show Bruchette worked there for two

years in the 1960s as an aide.

Jennifer was born with Down's syndrome, a congenital condition usually caused by the presence of an extra chromosome and characterized by mental and physical retardation, mongoloid features and shortened life expectancy.

She has the mental capacity of a 7- or 8-year-old and attends special education classes at Public School 22 near her home on Wardwell Ave. in the Westerleigh section of the island.

Schweiger, 40, an accountant with New York Telephone in midtown Manhattan, said he and his wife, Karen, sought to foster a sense of independence in Jennifer while instilling in her a wariness of those who would prey on the innocent.

"She knows where she lives," Schweiger said. "She could say her name. She knows her address, 291 Wardwell—she says Wadwell. She knows her home phone number. She memorized that because we kept drilling that into to her in case she happened to wander sometime. And we taught her to use a public phone."

A neighborhood favorite

Jennifer was a neighborhood favorite, scooting along the sidewalks on her bicycle with training wheels, her pig-tails flapping in the breeze. She would stop to play with other girls and would while away the warm hours in a small backyard pool.

Schweiger and his 39-year-old wife put their house on the market April 1 and had been preparing to move to a larger place in Lakewood, N.J.

But their life was suspended July 9 when Jennifer disappeared. She went off wearing a pink Sesame Street T-shirt and striped shorts. She was carrying a yellow pocketbook with about \$9 inside—telephone change, several singles and a crisp \$5 bill she'd received in a Confirmation card from her great-aunt.

All Willowbrook employes and residents, about 100 of each, have been interviewed.

"I really can't think of a damn thing we haven't done except solve the case," said Assistant Chief Marino. "It's a cliché, but we're not leaving any stone unturned."

Schweiger said he is satisfied with the police effort so far but he is concerned the search, which included hundreds of neighbors, will lose momentum with each passing day.

But for Schweiger there is no giving up his personal hunt. Last week, on one of his daily rounds, he stooped to pick up a scrap of yellow plastic—the purse, he thought for a moment.

"There must have been something he said to her to really coax her," he said, fingering the plastic. "What amazes me is that here's a filthy old guy with a little girl walking along and nobody challenged him. Nobody."

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