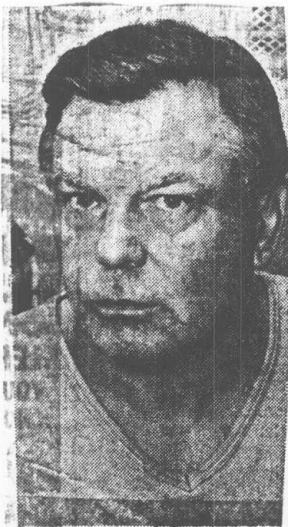


The hunter who found Jennifer



George Kramer

By PHILIP RUSSO
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

An avid woodsman's experience and his wife's intuition led to the discovery of the body of Jennifer Schweiger, the Great Kills couple said yesterday.

George Kramer, 56, and his wife, Nancy, said that her "strong feeling" confirmed the hunter's instinct that led him to discover Jennifer's buried body in off an isolated path on the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook, Saturday.

Kramer, a retired firefighter, said that when he discovered the

patch of ground where authorities unearthed Jennifer's body Wednesday night, he called his wife, who was out on her first day of searching for the missing Westleigh child, to the plot in a clearing of woods behind Building 27.

"My wife came over there and stood there and she got a feeling, intuition," Kramer said in an interview in his Cleveland Avenue home.

"I stood on the spot and I felt sick inside and I told my husband,

'She's here,'" Mrs. Kramer said. "I felt very strongly."

Although Mrs. Kramer wanted it made clear she is not a psychic, she admitted to having "strong feelings" at times.

"I knew she was there," Mrs. Kramer insisted, even before authorities confirmed the body was that of Jennifer.

Her husband also believed the body found was Jennifer's, he said. Kramer's first thought when he dug up part of the body was, "this is what we've all been looking for."

Kramer, who works nights as a security employee at a Manhattan construction site, said he had been helping in the search for Jennifer "off and on" for about three weeks, mostly during the day.

However, he believes it was his years of hunting and camping in the woods that provided him with the ability to observe small details that other industrious searchers might have missed.

"I've been a camper and a hunter all my life and I know the woods," said Kramer, who spent 18 years working with Engine Co. 156 out of the Broadway firehouse in West Brighton. "To come into an area, and it's all heavily wooded, and to see this, it was too bare. He (Jennifer's killer) did such a good job hiding it, people would have missed it. I understand there were even dogs (following Jennifer's scent) in that area."

Kramer also said he believes that recent wind and rain might have scattered leaves and loose dirt that hid the plot from previous searchers.

The soft-spoken Kramer said that when he decided to again check the living area of Andre Rand (Jennifer's accused kidnaper) in the Willowbrook woods on Saturday he followed a trail leading away from the site. He eventually found a shovel and rake, as well as a large stone that had a multi-colored cross and mysterious circles painted on it.

"It looked like something Rand did because he was a painter," Kramer said, referring to Rand's background as an itinerant sign painter.

When he saw the painted stone, Kramer said, it occurred to him that Rand, or others, might have used the site for satanic rituals because, "It was brought up (in press reports) that they were supposed to be up in that area" of the Greenbelt.

According to Kramer, the trail continued away from the large stone, eventually leading to a clearing in the thick woods a short distance away. "The area of the ground did not look right," he recalled.

At that point, he brought over his wife, who had become separated from him during the search of the area. She then experienced her "strong feeling" and Kramer reported his hunch to Donna Cutugno, coordinator of the Friends of Jennifer, a group that has searched daily for the missing girl.

The patch Kramer discovered was not examined further because SIDC security guards were trying to clear the area of hordes of searchers as darkness neared, he said. Mrs. Cutugno didn't inform police of Kramer's suspicions because there had been "so many other false starts and finds," he said.

On Sunday, Kramer again brought up his suspicions to Mrs. Cutugno who he said replied, "We better stay out of there, because of the security problem. She said if you go back, go back on your own in twos or threes and go through the woods so security doesn't see you."

However, Kramer, who has had "about four or five hours of sleep" since Saturday, was too exhausted to search on Monday and Tuesday. By Wednesday though, he returned to the site after telling some of his fellow searchers, "I have to go back there. I have to. I have this feeling."

He returned about 3 p.m. Wednesday, bringing a shovel with which he uncovered what turned out to be part of Jennifer's arm.

However, when he went back to the searchers' headquarters in Holy Family R.C. Church to phone Mrs. Cutugno, she said there were no other volunteers available to dig the site and that Kramer should call back in the evening when more searchers would show up, he said.

Around 7 p.m., Kramer ran into an old acquaintance, Ron Jacobs, an off-duty sergeant with the Emergency Services Unit, who was with another group of searchers.

The two men, joined by two ESU officers summoned by a phone call from Jacobs, and about 10 other searchers, then returned to the scene and made their grisly discovery, Kramer said.

Even before authorities identified the body as Jennifer's, the Kramers, who have two children of their own — Linda, 23, and George, 18 — said that in their minds, the case was closed.

"I had mixed feelings finding her," Mrs. Kramer said. "I felt if it was, or is her, the parents, hoping she was alive, would put her to rest and go on with their lives."

Kramer said that other than sympathy for the Schweigers, his only feeling was, "I'm sorry I didn't go back sooner."