

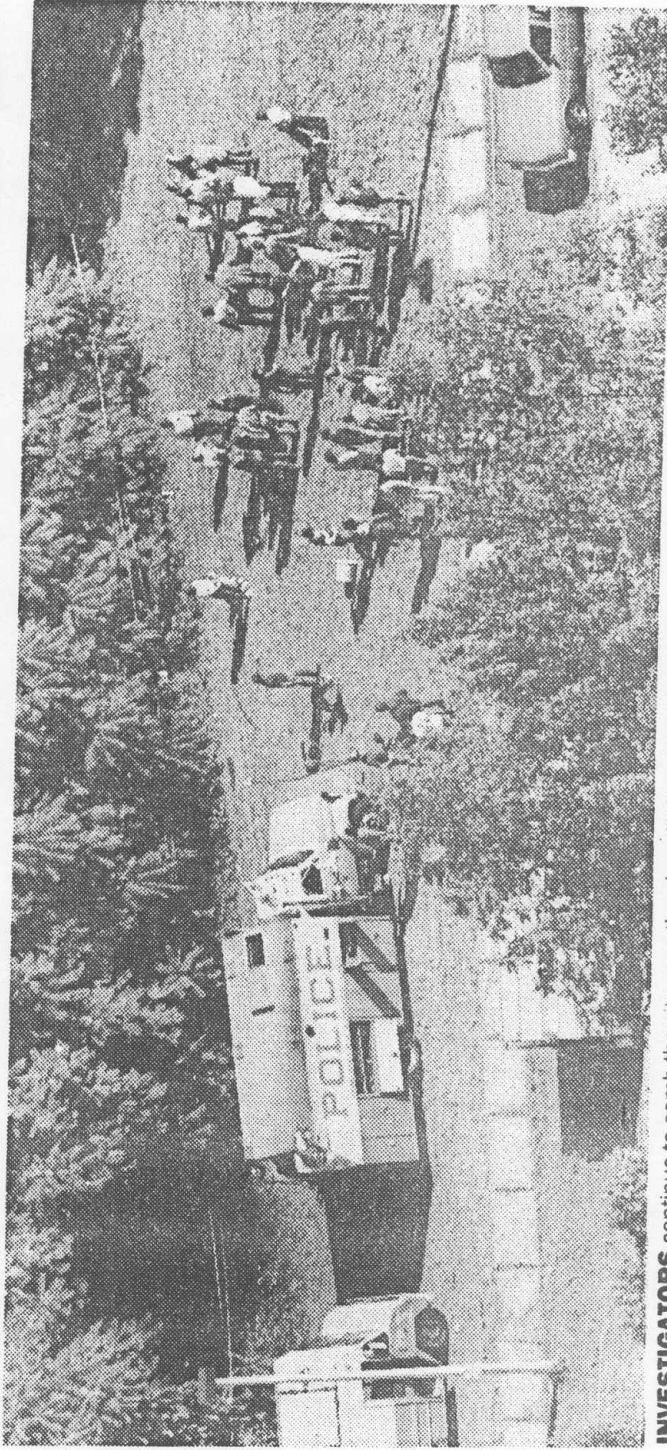
# Yes, it was Jennifer, and it was homicide

## Police search for more

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Daily News Staff Writers

The nude body found Wednesday in a shallow Staten Island grave was identified positively yesterday as that of 12-year-old Jennifer Schweiger. The medical examiner's office called her death a homicide.



**INVESTIGATORS** continue to comb the site near the closed Willowbrook facility on Staten Island, where the body of Jennifer Schweiger was found Wednesday, buried in a shallow grave.

PAUL DeMARIA DAILY NEWS

# It was Jennifer

As police sealed off a wooded area near the former Willowbrook mental institution and dug for the remains of other possible victims, the Staten Island district attorney's office awaited the medical examiner's report on the cause of death of the 12-year-old Down's syndrome victim, who had been missing since July 9.

A spokeswoman for the medical examiner's office said a daylong autopsy had failed to establish the cause of death, a determination crucial to any possible murder prosecution.

## It will take weeks

"The determination of cause is being made difficult by the decomposition of the body," she said. She said microscopic and chemical tests will take "at least several weeks" to complete.

It was shortly before 4:30 p.m. when Jennifer's parents, Karen and Kenneth Schweiger, were notified at their home on Wardwell Ave. in Westerleigh, S.I.

Shortly before the arrival of the detective who delivered the news, the Rev. Henry Gentile of Holy Family Church entered the house and prayed with the family, reading scriptural selections used earlier in a special Mass offered for the family.

Then Detective Bob Jensen arrived and announced that the body was Jennifer's. "At first, Kenny didn't hear the detective," said Teri Russo, who runs the Down's Syndrome Foundation school that Jennifer attended. "But then when he did hear, he broke down and cried and cried, and the mother went into shock."

Andre Rand, the 43-year-

old drifter who has been charged with kidnaping Jennifer, was undergoing psychiatric tests at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn.

## No murder case yet

Until the discovery of the body late Wednesday, the district attorney's office was preparing an abduction case against Rand. Even after the body was unearthed, no formal effort was under way to prepare a murder case against Rand, according to assistant District Attorney Timothy Koller.

"Right now there is no preparation of a murder indictment," Koller said. "We're waiting for formal identification of the body and formal establishment of the cause of death."

The body was discovered by retired Firefighter George Kramer. He called for help, and a group of 12 people responded, including police officers, the Rev. Gentile and Donna Cutugno, head of the Friends of Jennifer group.

Cutugno said Emergency Service Sgt. Ronald Jacobs dug into the earth with his hands, and quickly uncov-

ered part of a foot.

"The women all screamed—they were hysterical," said Cutugno. "Then Father Henry went down and gave the body last rites and a blessing. And then the group said a prayer over the body."

## Body taken with soil

The body, together with all the dirt around it, was taken to the morgue. The medical examiner's office later said the child was unclothed.

"I can't believe they found her there—we combed this area hundreds of times," said searcher Linda Fawcett, 26.

After the family was informed that their daughter's body had been identified, Betty Jean Fleming, a cousin of Kenneth Schweiger, walked out of the house and read a statement: "The last five weeks have been extremely difficult ones... the support and love given by family and friends have sustained and strengthened them."

Authorities yesterday said that Rand had been identified as a suspect and questioned in the disappearance of 5-year-old Alice Pereira in 1972. Rand worked as a painter at the Tysens Apartments in South Beach, S.I., where Pereira lived.

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