

S.I.'s little 'saint' gets

fond farewell

By MARY ENGELS and LARRY SUTTON

Daily News Staff Writers

Staten Island said goodbye to a sweet little girl yesterday.

The funeral of Jennifer Schweiger, the 12-year-old found dead near Willowbrook last week, brought together the cops, the firemen, the priests, the paramedics, the friends and the neighbors who spent a month searching for the child after she disappeared July 9.

Jennifer's parents, Kenneth and Karen, remained composed throughout the service at Holy Family Church in Westerleigh. Afterward, Cardinal O'Connor hugged the couple.

Then they cried.

The 650 people attending the funeral heard Bishop Patrick Ahern describe Jennifer as "that dear, lovable child who charmed us all." O'Connor emphasized the joy that the cheerful girl with Down's syndrome brought to her family, and praised the parents for the love they gave in return.

"I have an opportunity to be celebrating a Mass of great joy in the realization that this youngster is now in the arms of God," O'Connor said. "I don't use the term 'saint' loosely, but today I use the word 'saint' in reference to this very dear little girl."

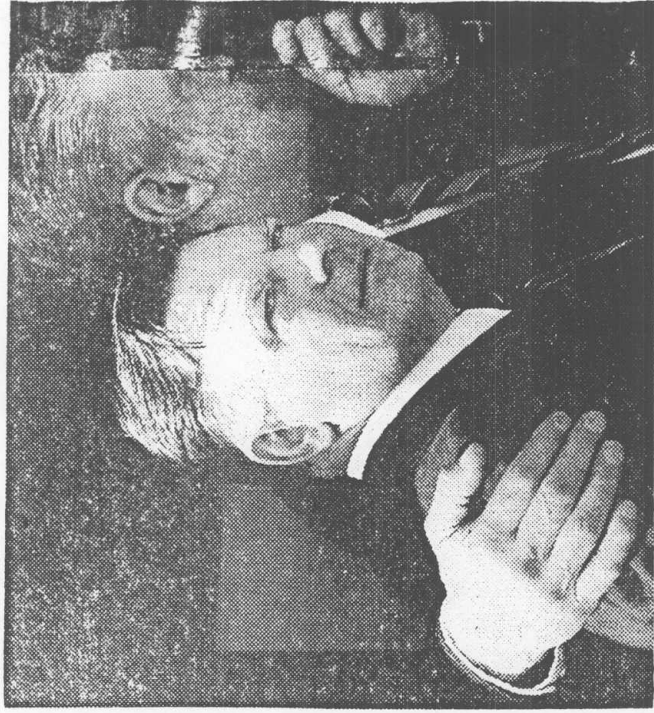
"There was not a person on



Jennifer Schweiger

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— Cardinal O'Connor



RETIRED Fireman George Kramer at the funeral yesterday. He was the searcher who found child's body on grounds of Willowbrook center.

Cutugno, who led the Friends for Jennifer Search Committee, noted that Rand is also a suspect in the disappearances of Alice Pereira, 5, in 1972; Holly Ann Hughes, 7, in 1981, and Tiahease Jackson, 10, in 1983.

Jennifer's white, gold-trimmed coffin arrived at the church shortly before 10 a.m. Yellow and white chrysanthemums decorated the altar.

Jennifer's mother, wearing a white and black blouse, black skirt and pearls, and her father, in a dark blue pin-striped suit, sat with her brother, Kenneth Jr., and her paternal grandparents, Louis

and Hazel Schweiger, and her maternal grandmother, Agnes Gloge.

George Kramer, the firefighter who found Jennifer's body, attended with his wife Nancy. Other searchers — members of emergency rescue groups — and Helen and Sven Cedarholm, grandparents of Holly Ann Hughes, sat close by and listened as O'Connor spoke of "the special place in heaven" reserved for Jennifer.

Jennifer was buried at St. Mary's Cemetery in Lakewood, N.J. Her family plans to sell its Staten Island home and move to that community later this year.