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Body of woman found in woods recalls unsolved '90s homicides

By Paul Liotta | Posted December 28, 2018 at 06:00 AM | Updated December 28, 2018 at 08:19 AM

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STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- The mysterious case of a woman found dead in the woods of Staten Island's South Shore sparked reminders of similar cases from the 1990s.

Missing for over a week, Yelina Rabkina's naked, burned and partially-decomposed body was discovered by two teenagers in Long Pond Park on Nov. 25, according to law enforcement sources.

Medical examiners ruled her death a suicide, but the way her body was found led multiple readers to point to two homicides in the borough that happened in the 1990s.



Susan Dalton was murdered on Grymes Hill in 1996.

Susan Dalton's body was found about 40 feet into the woods off Campus Road near its intersection with Howard Avenue on Grymes Hill in September 1996.

Like Rabkina, Dalton's body was found naked with burn marks, and was believed to have been in the woods several days before she was found by a traffic enforcement agent.

However, a medical examiner ruled Dalton's death a homicide by strangulation, and also determined that she suffered a stab wound that penetrated her spleen.



The area where Susan Dalton's body was found, shown in this 1996 photo. Body was reported against the auto part seen on the right side of the photo. (Staten Island Advance/Rob Sollett)



Neighbors with the dogs of Susan Dalton, after her murder in 1996. (File photo)

The landlord of Dalton's Seaview Avenue apartment called police two days before her body was found out of concern that she was not seen with her three dogs the entire weekend.

Police and Dalton's parents went to check her one-bedroom apartment and found the dogs unattended.



Crime scene detectives look for evidence in Susan Dalton's Ocean Breeze apartment after her death in 1996. (Staten Island Advance/Jin Lee)

They also found the air conditioner, television and radio still running.

A shirt was laid out on an upright ironing board and the iron was still plugged in.



The site where Dalton's body was found. (Staten Island Advance/ Paul Liotta)

Cops at the time believed Dalton, 37, was killed somewhere beside her apartment and dumped at the location near Wagner College.

When reached by the Advance, her family declined to comment about the cold case that remains unsolved.

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Staten Island Advance

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1996 50 CENTS

Woman's body found in woods

Discovery made by traffic officer checking cars on Campus Road near Wagner College

By ANNE MARIE CALZOLARI
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

The nude and badly decomposed body of a woman was found in a wooded tract near Wagner College, Grymes Hill, yesterday.

A traffic enforcement officer with the Police Department was on Campus Road checking for illegally parked cars shortly before noon when he spotted the body.

The body was propped up near an abandoned piece of an auto, about 40 feet from the curb. The spot is deep into the woods closest to the Howard Avenue entrance to Campus Road.

Some students say they use the densely wooded area as a route to a nearby softball field on the grounds of the former Augustin-

ian Academy, which was recently purchased by Wagner, rather than battle the dangerous curves of Howard Avenue.

The woman was found lying on her back. A pair of pants and what appeared to be a club were among the items taken as evidence. Police also dusted an empty Budweiser long-neck bottle for fingerprints.

The body is of a petite white female, between 25 and 30 years of age, according to Lt. Thomas Burke, commander of the 129th Precinct Detective Squad. The body apparently was dumped there sometime within the past week.

Police say they found no outward signs of violence and were awaiting an autopsy report to determine how she died and whether she had been sexually assaulted.

Investigators will check dental records and fingerprints in an effort to identify her, Burke said.

Dr. Norman Smith, college president, said he has no reports of missing students and insisted the finding wasn't cause for alarm.

"There just doesn't seem to be justification for the alarm. The only worry we have is fear itself," Smith said.

Smith noted that his security staff is on guard 24 hours a day, seven days a week and that access to the dormitories is by student identification only.

Students, both former and current, as well as residents on nearby streets, were disturbed at the finding and some women said they would no longer park on that street.

"I used to walk by myself, but now I won't," said one 20-year-old junior.

PLEASE SEE BODY, PAGE A12



A unidentified traffic enforcement officer with the Police Department was on Campus Road checking for illegally parked cars shortly before noon when he spotted the body.

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ADVANCE TONY CA

friend killed, daughter hurt while a mother watches in horror

No charges in tragic Hylan accident

McPOLIN STAFF WRITER

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BOARD OF ED:

No decline in school violence

es indicate serious mayor calls



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The front page of the Thursday, Sept. 19, 1996 Staten Island Advance shows coverage of Dalton's murder.



A police sketch of the unidentified woman, whose body was found in the weeds off Seaview Avenue.
(File)

Another woman's body was found in September 1991, nearly five years to the day Dalton's body was discovered.

The woman, who remains unidentified, was found wearing a black dress with a pink collar, Thom McAn balloon sneakers, two gold necklaces, and a small ring with a watch face, according to an FBI flier.

She was discovered in a ditch on Seaview Avenue across from South Beach Psychiatric Center.

Authorities say the woman was between the ages of 20 and 27, and was found with a small red and blue tattoo of a scorpion on her right buttock.



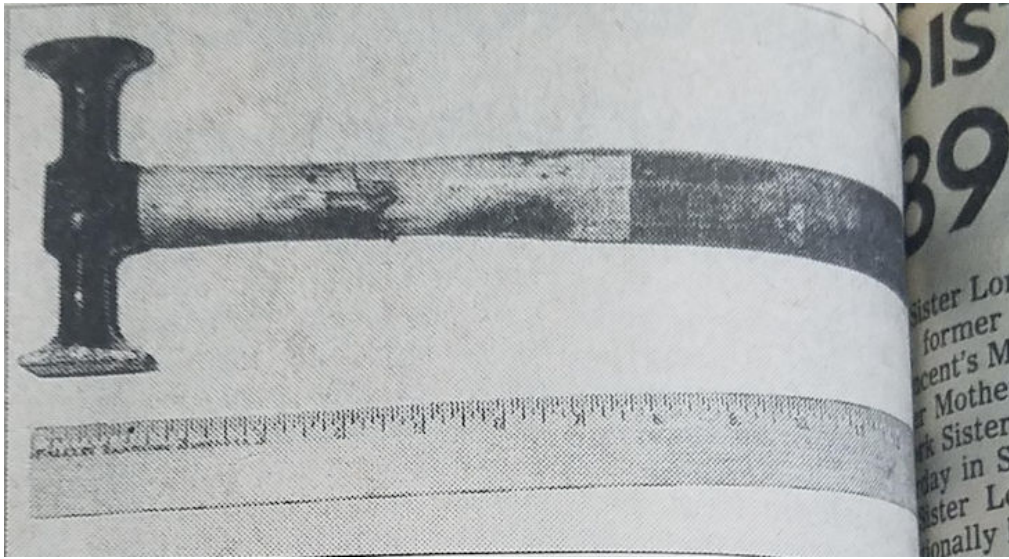
The weeds where the unidentified woman was discovered. (Staten Island Advance/ Paul Liotta)

Investigators believe the woman was strangled, bludgeoned to death, and dumped in the ditch the day before she was found.

Her body was then set on fire. It was found surrounded by burnt weeds and lying handcuffed on top of the murder weapon -- an industrial-use hammer with a wooden handle inscribed with "Loyd L," detectives said at the time.

She was found by a man walking in the area.

Nationwide alerts were issued and a check of missing person reports turned up no identity for the woman.



This image of a blood-stained hammer found under the woman's body ran in the Advance in 1992.

The woman was described as being white, in her early 20s, about five feet, seven inches, and weighing about 115 pounds. She had shoulder-length brown hair and brown eyes. She had two gold chains around her neck and was wearing a ring watch.

While in the morgue, investigators were able to get a complete set of fingerprints, but were unable to find a match through either city Police Department records or national FBI records.

A check of missing persons records in all 50 states has also failed to turn up any clues about the woman's identity.

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