

Los Gatos man says he killed Tania Zack

A Los Gatos man has confessed to killing former Aptos resident Tania Zack, whose disappearance more than four years ago from Highway 17 caused one of the most widespread searches in Santa Clara County, a newspaper reported.

Few details about the arrest of the 28-year-old man or his reported confession were available today. The San Jose Mercury News reported that Damon Joc Wells, an auto mechanic, was arrested Thursday night and confessed to killing Zack, whose body was found in Sep-

tember 1984, three weeks after she disappeared.

Wells had not been a suspect in the case before Thursday, reports said.

Deputy John Mollo of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department said today that police officers had been instructed to refer all calls to the District Attorney's office. The assistant district attorney in charge of the case could not be reached.

According to the Mercury News, Wells grew up in Los

Gatos and had minor scrapes with the law. He is being held without bail in Santa Clara County Jail and will appear in court Tuesday, the newspaper reported.

Zack was 21 when she died. She worked as an accounting clerk at County Bank in Santa Cruz and moved to San Jose two weeks before her disappearance. She was engaged to be married.

Zack's Toyota Celica was found out of gas Aug. 27, 1984, on Highway 17 near Idylwild Road in Santa Clara County.

For three weeks, searchers led by her father, Peter, combed the Santa Cruz Mountains looking for clues to her disappearance.

Her purse turned up at Vasona Reservoir in Los Gatos Sept. 4. A search party found Zack's body Sept. 15 in a ravine off Montevina Road, 1½ miles west of Lexington Reservoir. She had been killed by several blows to the head.

Searchers were directed to the spot by a trail of red cloth ribbons. Earlier, four psychics

were consulted in the case. Peter Zack said a psychic told him she dreamed of the site where his daughter's body was found. Although Santa Clara County Sheriff Bob Winter called for help from the "psychic community," detectives never said whether psychics were instrumental in directing the search party to the ribbons.

A woman known only as "Carole" said she placed the ribbons after having a dream about the body. She said she and a friend were unable to find a body before darkness and left

the ribbons to mark the area.

Zack's parents became obsessed first with the search for their daughter and then with her death. The woman's mother, Margaret, was arrested in March 1985 when she took part in an anti-pornography protest at a Santa Cruz news vendor. Zack ripped up a Penthouse magazine during the protest.

The couple separated. Peter Zack lost his engineering job and now works at the Santa Cruz Post Office.

—Guy Lasnier