

# Missing Aptos woman believed kidnapped

By GREG BEEBE  
Sentinel staff writer

APTOS — The Aptos woman who disappeared while on a neighborhood walk was probably kidnapped, authorities said Monday.

Arlene Kazuko Tsuji, 25, was last seen around 7 p.m. Thursday. She vanished after leaving her Wilshire Drive home for a "routine one-hour stroll along a route she always took" said friends and co-workers.

Tsuji's disappearance is now being investigated as a "probable abduction," said Sgt. Craig Little of county Sheriff's Office.

She is the second woman in 1½ years to disappear under suspicious circumstances in the county. And she, like Cindy Fawcett before her, vanished without a trace.

Fawcett, a 32-year-old bartender, disappeared on April 11, 1990. She was last seen buying a soda at a gas station on Scotts Valley Drive in Scotts Valley. Like Tsuji, "it was not her nature" to leave town without notifying friends or relatives.



Arlene Tsuji

Sheriff's investigators said they have no reason at this time to believe the two disappearances are related.

Tsuji was reported missing early Friday afternoon when she failed to show up at 9:30 a.m. for her job at

a Capitola travel-tour company.

Friends and co-workers, joined by Sheriff's deputies, Explorer Scouts, the Sheriff's Motorcycle Posse, and the Monterey Bay Search and Rescue Dog Team, began combing the area around Vienna Woods — located between Cabrillo College and the border of Nisene Marks State Park — Friday afternoon and evening.

The search for the popular, 5-foot tall Asian woman was resumed Saturday morning. Rain, however, hurt efforts to track Tsuji using search dogs. Her boss, Kirk Montero, found an earpiece to a stereo tape player near the top of Haas Drive, which leads into the Thousand Oaks neighborhood of Aptos. Montero believes the earpiece may have been part of the

tape player Tsuji always wore on her nightly strolls.

On Sunday, deputies interviewed residents exiting Thousand Oaks — which is separated from Vienna Woods by a quarter-mile trail through a large open field — in an effort to pick up clues about Tsuji's disappearance.

Sheriff's investigators intended to recheck the field and certain areas behind Cabrillo College and near Nisene Marks State Park on Monday afternoon.

Investigators are also probing a "viable" link between Tsuji's disappearance and an attempted kidnapping in the Vienna Woods area Oct. 15. The 20-year-old intended victim of the kidnap did not tell authorities of the incident until they came to her

home seeking clues in the Tsuji case.

The woman told deputies that a short, well-built Latino male adult, 23-24 years, with slicked back hair and a white T-shirt and acid-washed blue jeans attempted to pull her into a late-model, foreign-made, white-silver blue pickup truck.

The woman managed to flee, describing two men who were riding with the Latino male as 23-25-year-old bushy blond-haired surfer-types.

Meanwhile, the mood Monday at the tour company where Tsuji works was somber, said Montero.

"There was nobody in the office that didn't love her dearly," he said. "The hardest part is that you feel frustrated be-

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cause you went out there and everybody searched and helped and looked ... And now here we are and she's not at her desk," said Montero.

Tsuji's co-workers have printed up more than 1,000 fliers, and have been posting the handbills at locations in Aptos, Soquel and Capitola where she was known to frequent. Montero praised the efforts of authorities to find the woman described as "cute as a button" and "very independent."

"They've been very commendable. They've tried so hard to do things," he said.

The boyfriend of Cindy Fawcett, however, has emerged frustrated and bitter from the long, fruitless investigation into her disappearance.

"The anger is building and building," said Tim Woods, a 36-year-old Soquel sound engineer. "(The case) hasn't been resolved for me at all and I haven't been really able to deal with it very well," said Woods.

"I am determined to find out what happened to her and I'm trying to figure out what that takes."

Woods has upped the reward for

information leading to Fawcett's discovery to \$10,000. He was critical of the Scotts Valley Police Department, the agency in charge of the Fawcett investigation.

"They've been pretty poor ... I call and they say 'We're doing something' but they're not. They're waiting for somebody to hand it to them," said Woods. "I'm pretty disgusted."

Capt. Tom Bush said Scotts Valley Police investigators are just as frustrated as Woods.

"It's very frustrating to the detectives who are working on it, too," said Bush. "We're still following up leads, it's still an open case and we're doing the best we can with it ..."

"We've done so many public service announcements. We've done everything we possibly can, from search dogs to psychics, to try and drum up some leads or possible insight into where she'd gone or what might have happened to her."

The county Coroner's Office is charged with cataloging about 40 missing persons cases each month, said Deputy Coroner Marty Eryavec. The reports include runaway juveniles, walkaways from mental health care homes and fishermen swept to sea by waves.

Although most of the office's cases are resolved within a few months, time is not on the side of those searching for Tsuji and Fawcett, said Eryavec.

"It's quite the contrary," said Eryavec. "In any investigation — whether it be criminal or missing persons cases — usually the first few days are the most critical, sometimes the first few hours."

"If you can get that information right away, you might come across something that's hot."

Tsuji is described as Asian, 5 feet tall, around 103 pounds, with straight, brownish-black shoulder-length hair and brown eyes. She was last seen wearing a gray, long-sleeve pullover sweatshirt and black baggy short pants with cuffs. Anyone with information about Tsuji's whereabouts is urged to call 425-2121 or 425-2431.

Fawcett is described as 5 feet, 6 inches tall, 120 pounds, with brown shoulder-length hair and blue eyes. She was last seen wearing black Levi cotton Docker-type baggy pants, a black corduroy tank top and black, low-cut slip-on black shoes and a blue hip pack. Anyone with information about Fawcett's whereabouts is urged to call 438-2323.