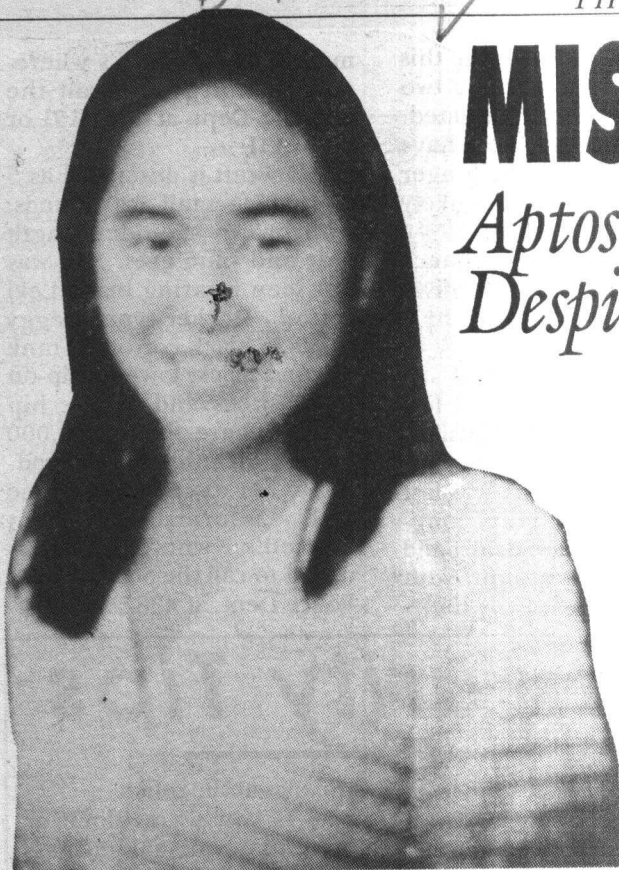


Tsuji, Arlene

MISSING WITHOUT A TRACE...

Aptos Woman's Disappearance Remains a Mystery Despite Extensive Search.



by Dawn Atkins

On October 24, Arlene Tsuji came home from work and went out for her nightly one-hour walk in her quiet Vienna Woods neighborhood. She knew the area well as the room she rented was only blocks from her parents house. At 7 pm, the 25 year-old Aptos High School graduate took her

Walkman-type stereo and walked into the cool autumn evening—and vanished.

Her disappearance was reported to the Sheriff's office at 12:06pm the next day when she did not show up for work at 9:30am for her job at a Capitola travel and tour company.

Santa Cruz County Sheriff's department officials believe that Tsuji was kidnapped and ex-

tensive searches have turned up few clues to her whereabouts.

"We treated this seriously from the onset," explained Sgt. Craig Little of the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office. "She is 25, not 15 or 16, she is a working person and according to everything I have heard about her, she was a reliable person with no problems and all of a sudden she is gone off the face of the earth. It is scary all right."

Amidst a cold rain friends and co-workers joined Sheriff's deputies, Explorer Scouts, the Sheriff's Motorcycle Posse and the Monterey Bay Search and Rescue Dog Team in combing the area around Vienna Woods—located between Cabrillo College and the border of Nisene Marks State Park.

The only thing they found was what appeared to be an earpiece to a stereo tape player near the top of Haas Drive. It could have been a piece of Tsuji's headset, "or it could be something somebody else dropped," Little said.

The county Coroner's Office receives 40 to 70 missing persons reports each month, most of which are runaway juveniles. Little said that Santa Cruz County probably has 70 group homes for youth.

"There are different categories of missing person, some of which are labeled 'at risk,'" Little said, "The 'at risk' people are the ones who are suicidal, people who can't take care of themselves or like this, where it is very out of the ordinary."

In addition to the ground searches, the FBI flew a helicopter over the area that week and CHP has since flown another helicopter reconnaissance, this one equipped with heat-sensing infra-red capabilities.

"The FBI was brought in fairly early even though it is our jurisdiction and there is no mandate to have the FBI involved," Little explained, "They volunteered to assist and that is why they used their

helicopter and other resources such as psychological profiling. They are part of the community and they wanted to assist."

During the door to door searches of the neighborhood, the Sheriff's department did come up with one possible lead. A 20-year old neighbor told them that three men in a pickup tried to abduct her.

The victim of the attempted abduction, whose name was not released, said she was walking in the 3300 block of Vienna Drive at 5:40 pm, October 15, when three men in a white or silver-blue pickup truck stopped and tried to get her into the truck.

The woman was able to get away but did not report the incident until questioned about Tsuji's disappearance.

The passenger who tried to grab her was described as a short, muscular Hispanic man, 23 to 24 years old. The front of his hair was combed back and parted on the left side,

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This composite sketch of the possible kidnapp suspect was provided by Santa Cruz law enforcement officials. The suspect is described as a Hispanic male 23-24 years old, short/well built, step-type haircut with two layers in the back, parted on the left side. He was seen wearing a white t-shirt and faded acid wash blue jeans. Two other suspects accompanied him, both of which were described as 23-25 years old, with bushy blond hair/surfer-looking. The vehicle in which they were riding is described as an 85-'90 import pick-up, white to silver blue, with halogen front headlights, and a sliding back window.

MISSING

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and the back was a step-type haircut with two layers.

He was reportedly wearing a white T-shirt and faded acid-wash jeans. The other two passengers were white men between 23 and 25 years old. They both were described as having bushy blond hair and being "sufer types."

The suspects vehicle, a foreign-made pickup manufactured between 1985 and 1990, had halogen front headlights and a sliding back window.

Although not certain the two events are connected, Little noted it is one of the few leads they have to go on. In addition, his department is looking into people with past criminal histories, other unsolved crimes in the area and reports of any suspicious people in the neighborhood.

Information bills have been put out, 58 different Sheriff's offices have been contacted, and she is listed as a missing person in California law enforcement telecommunications and with the National Crime Information Center.

Tsuji's friends and co-workers have put together a \$15,000 reward and have spread leaflets over several counties.

The Sheriff's Department has even accepted the help of several psychics who have volunteered to look for the missing woman. "We're soliciting any kind of help we can get," Little said, noting that even if it seems unusual, psychics have helped in other cases in the past.

"All this in hopes that something would turn up," explained a frustrated Little. "Nothing has at this point."

"I liken it to if you are swimming in a river that has crocodiles in it and you get eaten by a crocodile. That is one thing. But this is more like you are walking alone on the shore and the crocodile comes up and grabs you," said Little whose concern is personal as well as professional.

"This is a situation that could affect everybody," he said, "My wife and daughter take walks in our neighborhood and my neighborhood is only a few miles down the road."

He reported that the

neighbors are very concerned. An extra police officer has been temporarily assigned to the area and there have been several neighborhood watch meetings to increase awareness.

Tsuji is the second woman in the county believed kidnapped in 1 1/2 years. Cindy 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.

Fawcett, like Tsuji, was not known for leaving without notifying people and yet disappeared without a trace.

Sheriff's investigators said

they have no reason at this time to believe that the two disappearances are related. Yet one thing they both have in common is that the longer time that elapses the less likely the cases will be solved.

"The percentage chance of find them, especially alive, goes down as time goes by," Little said.

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 any infor-

mation about Tsuji's whereabouts is urged to call the Sheriff's Dept. at 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. There is a \$10,000 reward for information leading to her discovery. Anyone with information about Fawcett's whereabouts is urged to call the Scotts Valley Police Dept. at 438-2323. □

Personal Security Tips

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department has provided the following personal security tips written by the Attorney General's Crime Prevention Center and the Southern California Rapid Transit District.

Be Prepared

—Always be alert and aware of the people around you.

—Educate yourself concerning prevention tactics such as self-defense.

—Be aware of locations and situations which would make you vulnerable to crime, such as alley ways and dark parking lots.

Street Precautions

—Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you—especially if you are alone or it is dark.

—Whenever possible, travel with a friend.

—Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes and alleys where someone could hide.

—Walk confidently and at a steady pace.

—Make eye contact with people when walking.

—Do not respond to conversation from strangers on the street—continue walking.

—If you carry a purse, carry it securely between your arm and your body. Although a purse statcher's intent is to steal the purse, your personal safety may depend on not clinigng to it.

Car Safety

—Always lock your car doors after entering or leaving your car.

—Park in well-lighted areas.

—Have your car keys in your hand so you don't have to linger before entering your car.

—Check the back seat before entering your car.

—If you think you are being followed, drive to a public place or a police or sheriff's station.

—If your car breaks down,

open the hood and attach a white cloth to the car antenna. If someone stops to help, stay in your locked car and ask them to call the police or sheriff or a tow trucking service.

—Don't stop to aid motorists stopped on the side of the road. Go to a phone and request help for them.

While Waiting for a Bus

—Try to avoid isolated bus stops.

—Stand away from the curb until the bus arrives.

—Don't open your purse or wallet while boarding the bus—have your pass or money already in your hand.

—Don't invite trouble—keep gold chains out of sight; don't flash your jewelry; and turn your rings around so the stones don't show.

On Board Buses

—During off hours, ride as near to the bus operator as possible.

—Stay alert, and be aware of the people around you.

—If someone bothers you, change seats and/or tell the driver.

—Carry your wallet inside your coat or in a front pocket. A comb, placed horizontally in the fold of your wallet, will alert you if someone tries to remove it from your pocket.

—Keep your handbag in front of you and hold it close to your body with both hands.

—Check your purse or wallet if someone is jostling, crowding or pushing you.

—If you see any suspicious activity, tell the driver.

Office Security

—Never leave your purse or billfold in plain view or in the pocket of a jacket hanging on a chair or door.

—Personal property should be marked with your driver's license number.

—Don't leave cash or

valuables at the office.

—If you work alone or before/after normal business hours, keep the office door locked.

—If you work late, try to find another worker or a security guard to walk out with you.

—If you are in an elevator with another person, stand near the control panel. If attacked, press the alarm and as many of the control buttons as possible.

—Be alert for pickpockets on crowded elevators.

—Report all suspicious persons and activities to the proper authorities (office manager, building security, law enforcement).

—Be aware of escape routes for emergencies and post the police and fire department numbers near telephones.

And finally, if a crime does occur—report it.

Everyone should consider it his/her responsibility to report crime. Many criminals develop favorite areas for working, as well as predictable methods of operation. When you report all the facts about a crime, it helps the police assign officers in the places where crimes are occurring or where they are most likely to occur.

At least half of the crimes in the United States go unreported, either because people don't think the police can do anything about it or because people don't want to get involved. If you don't report crime, this allows the criminal to continue to operate without interference.

In many cases, it is the information provided by victims and witnesses that leads to the arrest of a criminal. So tell the police as much as you can; no fact is too trivial. Police need the eyes and ears of all citizens. □