

Brutal murder at Capitola Mall

By STEVE PEREZ
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CAPITOLA — A "well-dressed" young man is being sought for bludgeoning to death an elderly woman outside Gottschalks in the Capitola Mall Monday afternoon.

Emily Shaw, 78, of Santa Cruz was pronounced dead at Dominican Hospital at 5:09 p.m., nearly two hours after she was rushed there unconscious, bleeding from severe head wounds following a severe beating during an apparent robbery attempt, police said.

As of late Monday night, police said, no one had come forward to say they actually witnessed the murder. Police are assuming it took place in a parking structure, a short distance away from the south entrance of the newly-opened department store and that robbery was the motive.

Police are looking for an 18- to 21-year-old white male with fair complexion, who witnesses said was trying to put the woman in the back seat of a Honda parked on the ground floor of the two-story struc-

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ture at 3:15 p.m.

"They said they saw an elderly woman in her 70s in the car and someone rendering what they

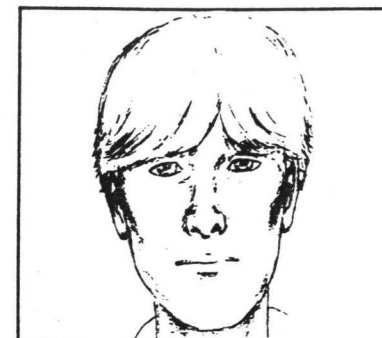
thought was assistance," Capt. Tom Hannah said. "She was in the back seat of the car when we arrived and what happened at this

point is really uncertain."

Authorities said the weapon used was a blunt instrument. A log, about 18 inches long, was found just outside the car.

An elderly couple from San Jose who declined to be identified said they saw the young man trying to pick the unconscious woman up off of her knees and put her in the back seat of the Honda as they approached their car which was parked next to it.

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Artist's depiction of suspect.

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Murder suspect sought

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They said they did not realize until later the woman had been beaten and was bleeding profusely.

"I asked him if he needed any help and he said no," the woman said.

"He said that she had Alzheimer's disease and that he dealt with it all the time. He insisted he needed no help," her husband said.

The dubious couple got into their car, but slowly circled the lot, returning after the woman insisted they call 911.

By the time they returned, they said, two unidentified women were trying to revive the woman. The women told them the suspect had fled with the woman's purse.

It was then they realized the woman was bleeding from a large wound in the back of her neck, they said.

The suspect was last seen running through an opening in a brick wall that borders the west end of the mall and a residential area.

A police dog from the Santa Cruz Police Department was used in an

effort to pick up his trail, but followed a scent only a short distance before losing it, according to authorities.

The Honda and surrounding area — roped off by police who combed them for possible clues — were spattered and smeared with blood, including the front driver's seat, right rear window and door.

According to a nursing supervisor, doctors worked for 45 minutes to try to save the woman before pronouncing her dead.

The suspect was described as 6 feet, 1 inch tall, 160 pounds, with blond hair and blue eyes. According to Hannah, he was "distinctively dressed," in a white, short-sleeve shirt with dark colored buttons, and black or gray cotton pants with pleats in the front.

Capitola Police investigators quickly worked with the witnesses to produce sketches of the suspect. The drawings released a few hours after the fatal attack depict a boyish, clean-shaven young man with medium length hair.

"There was nothing unusual about him, he wasn't acting like a

dope addict or anything, according to witnesses," Hannah said. "One witness said he was acting very nervous hanging around at first, but another who came upon him later said he was sitting in the stairwell very calmly (before he fled)."

Police are investigating the case as a homicide and said it was the first in Capitola since 1980.

"This was a real unusual crime," said Hannah, noting that the more typical mall offenses were shoplifts, auto burglaries and disputes over parking spaces.

"It appears like it was a chance meeting and for it to happen in Capitola, something this violent, is really unusual," he said. "And it's not a typical purse snatch, he didn't just grab it and run."

A close friend of the victim who did not want his name used, described Shaw as a "loving, thoughtful person" who belonged to Twin Lakes Baptist Church.

"She was just an absolutely darling person," he said, "the kind of person you'd want for your mother, just really thoughtful, loving and very, very nice."