

Bones tell tortured tale of murder

By JAMES REID

The bones of a young woman who died a violent, tortured death have been found in a shallow Rincon Valley grave near where the body of another young woman was found seven years ago and it was suspected this murder victim had been strangled much like a third murdered woman.

Friday's grisly discovery dredges up the still unsolved murders of numerous girls in Sonoma County during the 1970's, with all the mysterious similarities that link them together and that seem to point to a single murderer.

Hillers found the latest body Friday in a deep ravine along a spring-fed creek west of Callistoga Road, about 100 yards from the spot where 24-year-old Lori Kurza's body was found in December 1972 and traced like the body of Therese Walsh, whose body was found in December 1973.

In all, the bodies of six young women were found in the Santa Rosa area in 1972 and 1973 all of them in remote spots, near creeks with steep slopes on either side.

Still missing is Jeanette Kamahele, a 20-year-old Santa Rosa Junior College student who was last seen April 25, 1972, hitchhiking at the Cotati freeway on-ramp. Officials have long suspected she was murdered.

No one was saying patively the (Continued on Page 2A)



Forensic anthropologist Rodger Heglar directs search of creekbed where bones were found. Members of the investigation team surrounding him are, from left, Detective Irish Flint,

Identification Technician Nick Flint, Deputy Coroner Tom Siebe and Homicide Detective Rick Oliver.

Murder

remains found Friday are Kamahele's, but sheriff's homicide Detective Rick Oliver said the initial indications point in that direction. "It falls in her approximate age group and the body has been here about seven years," he conceded cautiously.

However Kamahele had a dental bridge and nothing like that was found at the scene he emphasized.

Walsh and Kurza were also known to hitchhike, as was Kim Wendy Allen, a 19 year old SRIJC coed who disappeared March 4, 1972 while hitchhiking from Marin County to Santa Rosa. Her body was found the next day off Enterprise Road.

The bodies of Yvonne Weber, 13, and Maureen Sterling, 12, were found in Fransa Valley in December 1972, some 10 months after they were lured away from the Redwood Empire Ice Arena.

And at almost the identical spot where their bodies were located, officials found the body of Carolyn Davis, 15, in July 1973. She dropped out of sight after she ran away from her Shasta County home Feb. 6, 1973. She too was believed to have been hitchhiking.

After Friday's discovery in Rincon Valley, sheriff's investigators concluded the victim had been tied in a position similar to the way Walsh was bound before her killer threw her into the icy water of Mark West Creek. Walsh's body was found in December 1973, her hands bound in front of her and pulled down between her legs, her feet tied and pulled back by a rope that also was tightened around her neck, strangling her.

In the Rincon Valley case, investigators found the remains of a rope loop with ankle bones sticking through it. The rope stretched up the back vertebrae and wrapped four times around the second and third neck vertebrae.

They also found a slip knot in the clothesline or venetian blind cord used to bind the victim as well as grommets and pieces of fabric that indicated the body may have been put in a duffel or laundry-type bag before it was dumped in the isolated spot, accessible only by a washed-out fire trail.

The cord was wound around the victim so many times someone even suggested she may have been alive



JEANETTE KAMAHELE
Body never found

when her killer threw her down the steep embankment and had to be securely tied to prevent her struggling or escaping.

There was no other evidence to indicate a cause of death. Dr. Rodger Heglar, a forensic anthropologist from San Francisco State University who was called in to assist in the investigation said preliminary evidence from the bones indicate the victim was in her late teens.

Although it was impossible to determine the sex of the victim without technical analysis the investigators seemed to assume the small body was a female's and they referred to it as "she" and "her."

A guard was placed at the site Friday and Saturday morning. Deputy Coroner Tom Siebe, Oliver and Dr. Heglar began painstakingly uncovering the remains, using brushes, knives, small shovels, an ice pick and tweezers, plus a metal detector.

Each shovelful of dirt and rocks was carefully sifted by detectives Triab Flint and April Ross, as well as identification technician Robert Vollmer, who found several teeth and a hard contact lens.

The contact lens may provide the clue needed to identify the victim, and it tends to confirm Dr. Heglar's preliminary conclusion that the remains are five to seven years old because soft contact lenses were developed relatively recently.

Another clue that may help in identifying the victim is a rib that had apparently been broken some time before her death and healed. It is sometimes possible to make identification by comparing X-rays of old injuries.

A skull and femur lay exposed on top of the ground when the team of investigators arrived at the remote spot, and early in his examination of the scene Dr. Heglar said several bones appeared to be missing, carried downstream in heavy winter rains or perhaps removed by animals. Reserve sheriff's deputies Dave Cooper and Jim Edwards volunteered to search the surrounding area for them and located a half dozen possibilities that were marked to be checked later.

Siebe found several samples of reddish or Auburn hair and Oliver also said he found fragments of what appeared to be brown thread, and the items were bagged with the other evidence to be sent to the state crime laboratory at Los Gatos for postive identification.