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Missing Former G.M. Official Found Slain in Bear Mt. Lake

By MARCIA CHAMBERS

The body of a man recovered earlier this month from a New York State lake has been identified as that of a former General Motors executive who had extensive business contacts in Europe and South America. He was found with three bullets in the head and weights attached to the legs.

The state police have opened a broad investigation into the circumstances of his disappearance from a midtown Manhattan hotel last January and his subsequent murder.

The businessman, George M. Perry, 64 years old, disappeared from the Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York City in January, leaving behind \$2,000 in American and Brazilian money in a hotel safe-deposit box. At his disappearance, he was working as an international trade consultant for a Brazilian company.

The body was found April 8 by fishermen on the shore of Lake Tiorati, one of many lakes in the 46,000-acre Harriman State Park on Bear Mountain. The park is in Orange County, 45 miles from Manhattan.

An autopsy showed that Mr. Perry had been shot in the head at close range with three .22-caliber bullets and that his body had been dumped into the lake sometime in January, when the park was deserted.

The body was fully clothed, dressed in a suit, an overcoat, shoes and socks. It was identified three days later through a label sewn into the suit by a tailor in Ohio. The victim's wallet was missing.

Now, two weeks after the body was recovered, the state police, who have assigned 12 investigators to the case, have gathered details about Mr. Perry's record in World War II and his business dealings both in the United States and abroad. State police officials said it was not unusual to have a dozen investigators working on such a case. No other police agency is investigating the slaying.

Because Mr. Perry had spent most of his adult life working abroad, the state police said they were looking into the possibility that he had done intelligence work for the United States. They are also checking his business involvement in New York City and South America. The state police said they had not yet traveled to São Paulo, Brazil, where



George M. Perry

Mr. Perry had been living in an apartment since August.

Family members said Mr. Perry had booked a flight to Zurich, Switzerland, that was to leave New York Jan. 9. He was to meet a business associate there, perhaps go on to East Germany and then head for Brazil, where he had been living.

"We don't know where this one will lead us," said Joseph Brown, the Orange County District Attorney. In an interview, Mr. Brown described Mr. Perry as a "worldwide traveler" whose assignments in 30 years with General Motors took him from Scotland to the European Continent to South America.

Both the state police and the prosecutor said they were looking for answers to a number of basic questions. For example, where was Mr. Perry killed? In New York City, in Orange County, or someplace in between? The police said they knew that he was dead when he was dumped in the lake, but they have been unable to determine when he was thrown into the water. Investigators said they also wanted to determine why Lake Tiorati was chosen.

Mr. Brown, the District Attorney, said that whoever disposed of the body must have known the state park well. The body was thrown into the lake at a spot, eight miles from the New York entrance, where the lake meets the road and there is easy access to the water.

So far the authorities suspect nor a robbery. They had not ruled out the possibility that Mr. Perry might have been the victim of a robbery gone awry.

But their investigation has focused on his corporate life and his possible intelligence dealings.

The police have been sorting through Mr. Perry's telephone records and other documents to try to piece together the last week of his life in New York City.

Mr. Perry's three sons — Bill, 33; Jack, 28, and James, 22 — last saw their father over Christmas, when he returned from São Paulo to go on a skiing vacation with them in Colorado. The sons said he was in good spirits. They said he was an avid skier and tennis player and was fluent in six languages — Czech, German, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese and also spoke some Russian. His parents, American citizens, were living in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1919 when Mr. Perry was born.

Last Jan. 2 he left Colorado for Ohio. He and his wife had lived in a luxury condominium in the Walden Country Club Development in Aurora, Ohio, near the former Terex Division plant of General Motors. From 1974 until his retirement in 1981, Mr. Perry was the general manager of Terex, which manufactured heavy equipment.

Mr. Perry's wife committed suicide last summer; she had been mentally ill for several years, her family said. The police said there was no connection between her death and Mr. Perry's.

All Appeared 'Fine,' Then Victim Vanished

The former General Motors executive arrived in Manhattan on Jan. 4, and as he had done on previous business trips, checked into the Grand Hyatt Hotel in 42d Street at Grand Central Terminal. His family believes that on the Jan. 9 flight booked to Zurich he was to meet Joseph Vanacek, the president of Still Bras Inc., his São Paulo concern, and to travel with him to a trade show, possibly in East Germany. From there, they were to go to Brazil.

Instead Mr. Perry vanished.

The youngest of his sons, James, a student at the Case Western Reserve University School of Law, said his last telephone conversation with his father took place on Friday, Jan. 7, at the hotel.

"I was still vacationing in Colorado," James Perry said in an interview. "My father sounded just fine. He was talking about ordinary family business. He told me he was going to go to Switzerland and would be leaving on Sunday, the 9th."

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