

Woman is found dead in quiet neighborhood - Herald-Mail, The (Hagerstown, MD) - November 13, 2003

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Nearly 12 hours after the body of a 68-year-old woman was found inside her home near Smithsburg Wednesday morning, Washington County Sheriff's Department investigators still were searching the scene for answers.

Sgt. Mark Knight said late Wednesday that investigators were treating the death of **Shirley Finfrock**, of 22128 Holiday Drive, as a homicide. No arrests had been made, he said.

Knight and other investigators would not release the cause of death Wednesday.

Knight, who remained at the scene until midnight, would not say if police had any suspects.

He said there were several unknowns in the case and that investigators were "trying to leave no rock unturned."

Authorities called to the house found **Finfrock** dead inside her home on the quiet outskirts of Smithsburg off Md. 64 Wednesday morning, Knight said.

Sheriff's Lt. Randy Wilkinson said **Finfrock's** husband, who was not identified by name, found his wife's body when he returned home from work at approximately 11:30 a.m. The husband had left the home just after 6:30 a.m., Wilkinson said.

Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation records list the owners of the house as Edwyn L. and **Shirley P. Finfrock**.

Ambulances were called to what initially was thought to be a suicide, according to Wilkinson. But Brian Smith, a nearby resident who is a Maryland State police trooper from the Frederick barracks, reported the death as suspicious after he arrived. Wilkinson said.

Wilkinson said the home might have been entered through a rear window. He said police were investigating foot tracks that led from the home to railroad tracks behind the home.

Wilkinson said a man had been arrested in connection with a burglary at about the same time the homicide investigation began, but it appeared it was not connected to the Holiday Drive incident.

Shirley Finfrock's body was to be taken to the State Medical Examiner's Office in Baltimore, where an autopsy was to be performed today, Wilkinson said.

Sheriff's Investigator Greg Alton said the home was burglarized in December 2001 and approximately \$300 in state quarters were stolen. A man charged in connection with that burglary and several others over the course of two years is being held in Pennsylvania on similar charges, Alton said.

Police worked in the neighborhood throughout the day.

Police dog handlers were taken along the railroad tracks. Uniformed officers from the Washington County Special Response Team and members of the Maryland State Police Special Tactical Assault Team Element unit clad in camouflage and armed with assault rifles, who were in the area for training, canvassed the neighborhood.

Police taped off a block-long section of road in front of the home earlier in the day.

Officers and forensic investigators walked in and out of the house with notebooks and cameras, while others interviewed neighbors.

Police and neighbors described the area as a quiet neighborhood that only recently had begun experiencing a slight rise in property crimes.

Wilkinson said several police officers from the Sheriff's Department, Maryland State Police and Hagerstown City Police live in the neighborhood, and called it a "generally quiet neighborhood."

"To be honest, if I lived in this neighborhood, I would be genuinely concerned," Wilkinson said.

Patricia Pattison, 53, who lives next door to the Finfrocks, said she knew **Shirley Finfrock** well.

"She (**Finfrock**) was extremely nice; she'd always bring treats to my dogs," Pattison said. "This is just blowing me away."

Pattison said the Finfrocks would come over for parties, and they would trade books.

"They're about the nicest people you'd ever want to meet," Pattison said.

Debbie Serig, 44, and her daughter, Lindsay Serig, 17, live in the neighborhood and stopped by Pattison's home after they heard about the death.

"That just sounds hard to believe," Debbie Serig said.

Adrian Curca, 36, who owns a pizza shop nearby, said the news was a shock for everybody in the area.

"This is one of the most quiet neighborhoods in Washington County," one where some people leave their doors unlocked, Curca said.