

Lost man is found dead in icy pond

He had dementia, wandered from Franklin Twp. home

**BY CATHY BUGMAN
AND ROHINA PHADNIS**
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

A search for a 74-year-old Franklin Township man who wandered from his home before bedtime ended yesterday morning when rescue workers pulled his body from a frigid pond.

Linburn Farquharson was found beneath a thick layer of ice in a pond near Metlers Road, not far from his Bayard Road home at Canal Walk, a gated, age-restricted community, police said.

Farquharson's wife, Marian, told police she last heard her husband at 11 p.m. Monday, but by 12:15 a.m., he had not come upstairs and was not in the house, and she called authorities.

She told police her husband suffered from dementia, but he had never wandered away before. She said she last saw her husband wearing his pajamas and slippers.

Franklin Township Police launched a search, responding with

a K-9 unit along with local fire companies and first aid squads. Rescue workers found a hole in the ice of an irrigation pond about 200 yards from the Farquharsons' dwelling, however, an initial search did not turn up any signs of the victim, police said.

The pond, which does not have any fences, signs or lights around it, sits about 20 feet off Metlers Road, less than a quarter-mile from the intersection of School House Road. By yesterday afternoon, chunks of ice had broken away from the edge of the embankment of the muddy pond where emergency personnel had set up their equipment.

The search continued into the daylight hours yesterday with help from the New Jersey Search and Rescue Team and other local agencies. A State Police helicopter conducted an aerial search.

When police launched another K-9 unit, the dogs lead officers to the pond, where firefighters pumped water from the pond and

broke through the ice, allowing members of the Somerset County Dive-Rescue Team to enter the water. They found him at approximately 10:40 a.m., police said.

Women who identified themselves as Farquharson's daughters were seen leaving the complex after 1 p.m. yesterday and solemnly identified the missing man as their father before driving away.

No foul play is suspected, police said. Franklin Township Police Department's detective bureau is investigating the incident, and an autopsy is pending.

Ken Selody, an owner of the 13-acre tract on which the pond sits, said it's "not often" he hears of anyone walking on his property, used to grow sod for sale.

"We're sorry it happened," he said of the incident.

Residents of the development were awakened with an early morning phone call with a pre-recorded message from police alerting them that a man was missing.



JIM WRIGHT/FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

Divers search for a missing 74-year-old man in a frozen lake adjacent to the Canal Walk senior housing development in Franklin Township.

Neighbors were stunned to learn that it was one of their own.

"I was surprised to hear it," said Charles Kelton, who has lived on Benjamin Street in the development for three years.

Speaking on behalf of Canal Walk residents, Community Manager Cathy Vaccaro expressed their

collective grief.

"The community is deeply saddened by the loss of one of its members," she said.

Cathy Bugman and Rohina Phadnis may be reached at cbugman@starledger.com, rphadnis@starledger.com or (908) 429-9925.