

ANTI-EASTER MESSAGE

Police search area where body found

From page 1.

Forensic Sciences.

Tatz would not confirm information from private detective Brian King, who said police had found a jaw bone that would be used to confirm the identity of the murdered woman through dental records.

King, who has helped the Gagnon family search for the well-liked woman, after police scaled down their investigation, said clothing found at the scene appeared to match clothes the murdered woman wore in her final hours.

Lamondin-Gagnon was wearing blue jean overalls, a yellow tank top and brown Birkenstock sandals featuring hand-painted flowers the night she disappeared.

But King's partner, Nino Calabrese, said the location of the remains casts doubt on the theory they are those of Lamondin-Gagnon.

They were "awfully close" to the avenue, he noted, for them not to have been seen earlier.

Dozens of officers and volunteers scoured areas near the Stouffville house for months after the 20-year-old Lamondin-Gagnon was murdered May 29.

However, a family friend said 19th Avenue is one of the few roads that volunteers and police didn't search.

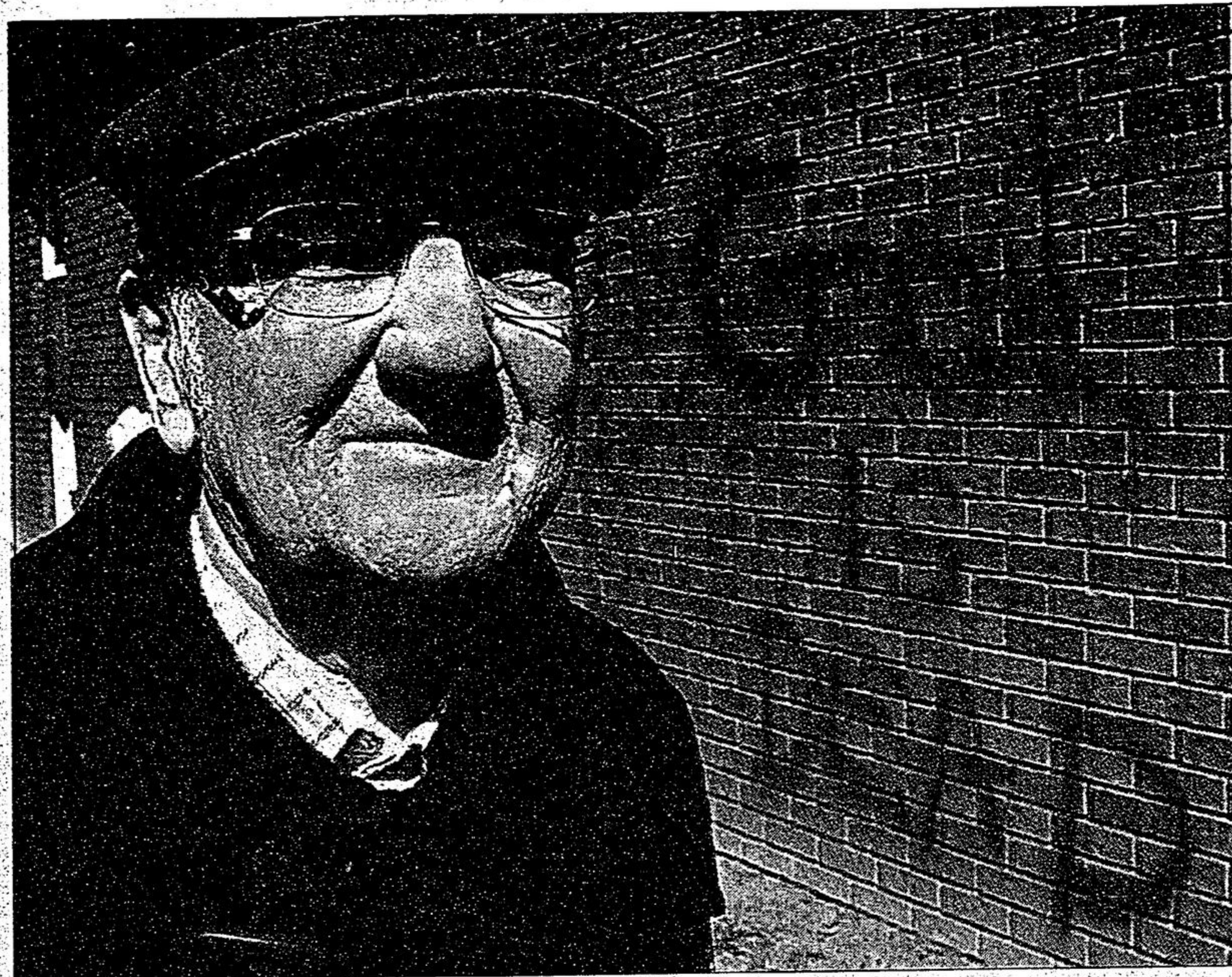
"York Region is so large. We didn't get to all of them. Jackie did the best anyone could do," said Margaret Carrington of Aurora.

Officers with York's forensic archeological recovery team removed the skeletal remains late Friday.

Police are continuing to look for evidence this weekend during a ground search north of 19th Avenue in Markham, halfway between McCowan Road and Hwy. 48. It is likely the area will remain closed until Monday morning, police say.

That's where a Markham-area man discovered the remains around 4 p.m. Thursday as he walked his dog.

Investigators from York Regional Police Homicide and Missing Persons Bureau are treating this as a suspicious death and are appealing to the public for assistance in this investigation. Any persons with any information are asked to call York Regional Police Homicide and Missing Persons Bureau at (905) 773-1221, ext. 7865, or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.



STAFF PHOTO/ROB ALARY

Father Leslie Tamas with message vandals sprayed on St. Mark Catholic Church in Stouffville on the Easter weekend. Vandals also shot holes in windows at the town's new pool/library complex, broke into a liquor store and damaged several cars. York Regional Police has stepped up patrols in the area.

Principals, think tank at odds over school rankings

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Many principals at Markham's publicly-funded high schools believe the narrow, academic focus of a recent study ranking secondary education in Ontario fails to give parents and students a holistic view of the school, its programs and its overall success.

But the Vancouver-based Fraser Institute report author Peter Cowley defends the statistics, arguing academics are the bottom line at any school and parents should know which schools are doing the job well.

"Because of the way the data has been put together, parents can see what's going on in terms of academics at their children's schools," Cowley said. "We set it up so these comparisons would not only be possible, but easily done."

However local educators

argue strongly that a student's success is based on many separate elements and as a general tool for parents, the study falls short.

"Many factors determine the effectiveness of schools," said Unionville High School principal Gayle Brocklebank-Vincent. Her school was ranked 36th of 566.

"We're proud of our school, we have quality staff and students who want to be successful. But I don't believe it's a good idea to rank schools. Each have different factors—the students themselves, the area in which they live, the focus of the school itself."

The Fraser Institute, a public policy watchdog some refer to as a right-wing think tank, released Ontario high school rankings Wednesday. Of the top 20 schools, all but three were private.

The criteria were strictly academic and based these narrow

indicators: The percentage of advanced level courses taken by students; the percentage of courses passed in Grades 11, 12 and OAC; the number of core subjects, math, English, science, taken by students in their last

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two years of high school; and how close the marks are between boys and girls taking advanced English and math.

"All of us have to understand

what that data means," said Jim Orfanakos, principal of Milliken Mills High School, which was ranked 98th. "It doesn't tell us about the variety of programs available or the satisfaction of parents or students."

And he points out private schools have the option of selecting their students, based on their grades, a luxury publicly-funded systems do not have.

"We must look at the diversity of needs," he said. "We deal with every student; we modify programs to fit their needs."

Cowley disagrees. "Even though schools may have a different emphasis or focus, you would hope they also reflect the things any school would do," he said. "I'd be worried if a school or district was saying students entering the trades after high school don't need to take A-level courses."

"So someone not going to university should not take

advanced courses? I find that a bit scary."

Meanwhile the York Catholic District School Board is still trying to determine why only two of its 10 high schools were ranked — St. Robert at 109th and Father Bressani at 464th.

Cowley explained if information was missing from any of the indicators, schools would not be ranked because results wouldn't be consistent.

But board spokesperson Chris Cable said it's "perplexing" two schools had all the data necessary while the others did not.

"We are in the process of looking into it," she said, adding while the study results "can't hurt, we would hate parents to pick a school based solely on these rankings."

"We'd strongly encourage parents to look further, at a school's strengths, focus, its broad-based environment. They all affect how a child does."

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