

MISSING PERSON SEARCH 2005



Mamie Lovette took a walk that puts people half her age to shame--7 miles from her home on Daniel Place in Fanwood to Inman Avenue in Woodbridge.

The only problem was Mamie, pictured at left seated with hat, who is 72 and has Alzheimer's disease, didn't tell anyone.

Suddenly, in mid-afternoon on December 22nd, she was gone. Her frantic family dialed 911 and thus began a 10-hour search and rescue mission involving dozens of police officers, volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel from Fanwood, Scotch Plains, Westfield and Clark.

"She never does this," said Victoria Cook, Mamie's sister who lives with

her and who watched the search operation unfold from the command post at the Scotch Plains Fire Department's south side firehouse.

In the same room were the search managers from Central Jersey Technical Rescue, a team of Union County-based volunteers who specialize in just this kind of thing. They huddled around computers that crunched the latest sightings and maps and consulted with police and fire officials from four towns.

Outside, eight teams of volunteers were led on coordinated searches of places where Mamie might have wandered to-- the woods and neighborhoods around Union Catholic High School where there had been a sighting-- the grounds around the YMCA and the JCC on Martine Avenue-- the area around L'Oreal on Terminal Avenue in Clark where there had been another sighting.

Union County Police brought their search dog and the State Police helicopter circled overhead, shining its bright light on the woods below. Residents of Scotch Plains around Union Catholic peeked out their doors, wondering what people with flashlights were doing in their backyards.

After several sightings that didn't pan out there came a report from Woodbridge that a police officer spotted a woman walking on Inman Avenue who fit Mamie's description-- maybe just another sighting, or maybe this was the real thing.

Within 30 minutes, by 12:30am, a police car pulled up to the command post in Scotch Plains and out popped Mamie, smiling and talkative but maybe just a little tired.

She was in remarkably good shape and good spirits and had a nice chat with some of the people who turned out to look for her.

After a medical check by EMT's from the Fanwood Rescue Squad, Vicky and the family took her home.

The Fanwood Rescue Squad also assisted in the foot search around Union Catholic High School during the early hours, and provided medical support to the search teams at the command post.

Managing the search were volunteers from Central Jersey Technical Rescue, NJ Search and Rescue and Union County Police. Conducting the actual foot search were members of the above agencies plus volunteers from the Fanwood Rescue Squad, Fanwood Fire Department, Scotch Plains Fire Department and Westfield Fire Department. Police officers from Fanwood, Scotch Plains, Westfield, Clark and Union County searched by vehicle and the NJ State Police provided helicopter support.

All that time, Mamie was far from the action. But it turned out that a lot of people cared about her and showed that in our community, one person's welfare is worth the trouble.

