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“Lieutenant Says Major Crimes Involved Since Beginning - Police Secure Murray Items For Evidence”

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State police say they have secured items from a missing 22-year-old University of Massachusetts at Amherst nursing student as possible evidence.

Lt. John Scarinza, commander of New Hampshire State Police Troop F, says the items are being held, possibly for further investigation. However, Scarinza also says it's not true the state police Major Crimes Unit is only now getting involved in the Maura Murray case.

Murray has been missing since she was involved in a minor one-car crash on Route 112 in Haverhill, N.H., about a mile east of Swiftwater Feb. 9. She has not been seen since the night of the accident. He said the Major Crimes Unit, and specifically, Sgt. Charles West, has been involved in the Murray disappearance since three days after she disappeared.

Scarinza also said detectives from Troop F and the Major Crimes Unit have been used during the missing person's investigation. He was emphatic that the items from Murray's car are not only now being looked at. "The items have already been gone through once," Scarinza said.

When asked whether any of the items, including clothing and books, had been analyzed for forensic evidence in the beginning of the investigation, he said, "You don't just send a bag of stuff down there."

However, he did say the items in Murray's black 1996 Saturn were inventoried by Haverhill police officers during the first week of the investigation back in February. In addition to diamond jewelry, books, clothing and some alcohol found in the vehicle after the accident, some items were missing.

"She had a (black) backpack when she left Massachusetts," Scarinza said. "We have not been able to locate the backpack in the car or her (dorm) room. That was the pack she used at school."

Scarinza also said when Murray left the Amherst campus, she had with her a box of wine, and bottles of vodka, Kahlua and Bailey's Irish Cream. The box of wine, of which most had been spilled, was found in the car. But some of the other bottles were not found.

Also found in the car, specifically on the back seat, was a book written by Nicholas Howe, titled, "Not Without Peril." Scarinza said the book is about tragedies regarding search and rescues in the White Mountains.

"Mrs. (Sharon) Rausch tells me that is Maura's favorite book," he said. "What does that mean? I don't know." Haverhill police, in a press release issued two days after Murray's disappearance, said she possibly was suicidal.

Because it has been nearly five months since the night Murray disappeared, and because state police believe there is not a lot to look for, Scarinza said it's appropriate to have the items in the car at the time of the accident returned to investigators so they can be held as possible evidence.

"I don't know what we will do with them," he said. "We want to have all the items if we need them. At this point, we are holding them for evidence." That includes Nicholas Howe's book. "For instance," Scarinza said, "is there something significant about that book? I don't know." If there is something highlighted in the book which may help with the investigation, they will have the book readily available.

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