

By AVELINO MAESTAS

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While the mother of a murdered Silver City woman prepares to bury her daughter, police in Maryland still have few clues about the circumstances surrounding her death.

On May 4, a passing motorist on Interstate 70 saw the body of Dusty M. Shuck, 24, near a truck stop in Frederick County, Md. According to a Maryland State Police press release, Shuck sustained head injuries and lacerations to her neck. She was last seen in New Mexico on April 24.

Lori Atwood, a Burro Mountains resident, spoke to the Daily Press Friday about her daughter's disappearance. Her mother said Shuck suffered from schizophrenia, but was receiving treatment at Border Area Mental Health Services when she disappeared.

"They had stabilized her here," Atwood said, "and she was looking good."

Atwood said her daughter was not released into her care that day, but instead walked away from the treatment facility.

"At about 2:10 she left," she said. "She tried to get a refund, and all her things."

Atwood had asked a clerk to tell her daughter to walk to a nearby hotel.

"It took me an hour and 25 minutes to get there," she said, "and in that time she was gone.

"She met somebody between Border Area and the hotel."

Neither Atwood nor authorities in New Mexico or Maryland know what occurred during the nine days before Shuck's body was found.

"I just want to get the word out that we desperately need to find out who picked her up," Atwood said. "They need to step up."

Sgt. Thornie Rouse, a spokesman for the Maryland State Police Homicide Division, said the investigation has not turned any leads.

"It's still continuing, but nothing's developed that would lead us in the direction of a suspect," he said.

According to Rouse, Maryland investigators traveled to Silver City last week as part of the investigation.

"We had a detective out there in New Mexico to speak with the family, and to try and backtrack what happened," Rouse said.

Atwood said her daughter was running away from her mental illness.

"Something bigger than her took her," she said. "Whatever it was told her to keep running, and that's what she was doing."

Atwood told the Daily Press that she didn't see what was happening with her daughter until it was too late.

"I never saw it, not until the last few months."

Because her daughter's illness was not severe, Atwood said, law enforcement personnel and judges across the country released Shuck, even though an Arizona court had ordered her into a treatment facility.

"Each state says you have to start the process there," she said. "When I put in a national (missing person) report, they would call me, and say 'We picked her up.'"

"The police won't hold them if they haven't done a crime, so I couldn't go pick her up."

Her daughter had expressed a desire to travel to Canada on several occasions, Atwood said, said she tried to convince Shuck that she needed a passport.

"When she got Canada, and she didn't have an ID, they turned her back," Atwood said. "People only saw somebody that was in the way, they never saw anything more."

And while she praised the investigators searching for her daughter's killer, she said the situation should be reversed.

"As hard as they're looking for her killer, it seems backward," Atwood said. "Why didn't they do that for a missing person's report?"

Atwood will now raise her grandson in her daughter's place.

"She was a wonderful mother," Atwood said. "I have a four-year-old grandson, and he'll never know her the way I did."

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