

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Pennsylvania Woman Who Disappeared 30 Years Ago Found in Puerto Rico

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Patricia Kopta was found after providing information to employees of a nursing home in Puerto Rico. By. FAMILY PHOTO.

A Pennsylvania woman who was reported missing more than 30 years ago was found in Puerto Rico last week, according to local authorities. The woman was declared dead seven years after her disappearance.

The woman, identified as 83-year-old Patricia Kopta, wandered through northern Puerto Rico after leaving behind her husband and siblings. In 1999, she was taken into an adult care home in PR after being determined to be a person in need, according to details of

the matter announced in Ross Township, Pennsylvania last week during a press conference (via the Associated Press).

Her husband, Bob Kopta, and sister, 78-year-old Gloria Smith provided details about Ms. Kopta's life during the press conference.

Ms. Kopta had been nicknamed "The Sparrow" because of her slight build, according to the AP. In her youthful years, she was a model and dance instructor and a straight-A student. After graduation, she worked in finance at a Pittsburgh plate glass company and would attend weekly ballroom dancing events, her family said.

Puerto Rico was a favorite vacationing spot for Ms. Kopta, said her sister. "She just loved the ocean, the beach, the warm sunshine," Ms. Smith told the AP.

After ten years working at the glass plate company, she quit because of migraines, according to Ms. Kopta's sister.

Thereafter, Ms. Kopta took a job at The Art Institute of Pittsburgh as an elevator operator, and that's when family members started seeing changes. "She said something about seeing an angel there," Ms. Smith, her sister, recalled to the AP.

Soon after, Ms. Kopta started preaching about the end of the world and warning people to take heed. She was briefly institutionalized following a medical diagnosis of "delusions of grandeur", which doctors said exhibited signs of schizophrenia.

After being released, Ms. Kopta kept preaching until 1992, the year she vanished, according to family members. Her husband, Mr. Kopta, said he came home and found his wife, who he had been married to for 20 years, missing.

The case bewildered family members and local authorities alike; police even sought the help of a psychic to no avail. The husband recalled his wife speaking of her love for Puerto Rico and would post ads in newspapers on the island commonwealth but received no responses.

Meantime, Ms. Kopta was meandering Puerto Rico's northern towns of Naranjito, Corozal and Toa Alta, located just southwest of the capital of San Juan, according to the AP.

When she first arrived at the adult home, she provided information hinting that she came to Puerto Rico from Europe on a cruise ship. But as her dementia illness started to progress, Ms. Kopta started to divulge the truth about the life, according to Ross Township Deputy Police Chief Brian Kohlhepp.

For Mr. Kopta's part, the situation is an overall sad occurrence, however his wife being found was "a relief off my mind," he told the AP. "When your wife goes missing, you're a suspect."