Robbery victim dies in car on Rte. 195

By TRACEY A. REEVES
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

SOMERSET, Mass. — An elderly New Bedford man died of an apparent heart attack early yesterday morning after he and his wife were robbed in their disabled car on Route 195 while waiting for help to arrive.

State police identified the victim as Sydney Horvitz, 74, of 435 John St., a retired military man.

Horvitz was well known in the New Bedford Jewish community for his volunteer and civic work.

According to Sgt. Robert Plummer of the state police barracks in North Dartmouth, Horvitz and his wife, Phillis, were driving to New Jersey to visit relatives when their car broke down on the highway just after 6 a.m.

Mrs. Horvitz, who was driving, pulled over to the side of the road and her husband raised the car's hood to check for trouble. Horvitz then attempted to flag down a motorist for help.

A car pulled up in front of the Horvitz car. A man walked over to Horvitz and ordered him to get into the back seat of his disabled car, police said. The man demanded Horvitz's wallet, took out $70, then threw the wallet back at Horvitz, walked to his car and drove away.

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HORVITZ, SYDNEY

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Attack

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It was then, said Plummer, that Horvitz said to his wife, "I think I'm having a heart attack. I can't breathe."

Meanwhile, a passing driver had seen the couple trying to flag down help and called state police. Less than 10 minutes after the robber left, a state trooper arrived. Horvitz was slumped in the back seat. He was taken by ambulance to St. Anne's Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Plummer said the Bristol County (Mass.) district attorney's office is investigating. That office withheld further information until a medical examiner could determine the cause of death.

Capt. Robert Peladeau of the Fall River Police Department Major Crimes Division said yesterday afternoon that the car driven by the robber had been found in Fall River.

Known for helping others

Horvitz's death shocked members of New Bedford's Jewish community, where he was well-known for his civic and volunteer work.

At Tifereth Israel Congregation, where he was involved with a Jewish study group for seniors, members remembered Horvitz as a kind and generous man.

"He was a person who always looking to help someone," said Rose Nebelcopf, a friend and member of the congregation. "He was a very quiet person, a very nice man."

About five blocks from the synagogue, on the street where Horvitz lived, residents were also shocked that their neighbor had died.

"It's not safe anywhere anymore. You could be walking down the street, minding your own business and a tragedy could happen," said Margaret Sylvia, who heard the news on the radio and later learned the victim involved was her neighbor.

Another neighbor, who requested anonymity, remembered Horvitz for his volunteer work with the elderly. She said he had spoken to her in past years about the arts and crafts he used to make with the elderly in convalescent homes in Israel, where he spent many summers.

"He was kind and decent man who always wanted to do something good for somebody," said the woman. "He wasn't interested in material things, just helping people."

Plummer said police are looking for a male in his 20s. Police are asking anyone who has information on the case to call the state police barracks in North Dartmouth at 997-0711.