

# Scientist Murdered After Call For Full BSE Testing

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A prominent physician at San Francisco General Hospital who once headed the San Francisco Medical Society was found stabbed to death inside the doorway of his Diamond Heights home Thursday, police said.

Dr. Robert J. Lull, 64, was discovered on the floor in the entryway of his hilltop home on Gold Mine Drive at Jade Place shortly after noon.

Hospital officials, concerned when he did not show up for the clinic he ran in nuclear medicine, alerted his personal assistant, Elsie Garce, who found the body, authorities said.

Lull was last seen at an appointment with his doctor at 3:40 p.m. Wednesday, according to police. Neighbors reported nothing unusual at the residence either Wednesday night or Thursday morning.

"At this point, we can't say what the circumstances were, but we know he was the victim of a homicide," said San Francisco police Inspector Holly Pera. "We're piecing together evidence at the scene."

Lull was well liked by his neighbors and respected by his colleagues, Pera said. "He had a real love for medicine,"

she said.

Police say they have no sign of forced entry into the four-bedroom, two-story home, but one unusual clue was plainly visible out front.

Cherry pits -- marked by yellow evidence tags -- were found scattered in front of the walkway leading from the street to the door as well as inside the home. "Our fondest hope is that we can find DNA from the pits," Pera said.

Another clue police are focusing on is a tan or gray car that they say Lull was known to drive, a car that once belonged to one of his sons. Two other cars, a Mercedes Benz and a Lexus, were in the garage.

But the third car "appears to be gone," Pera said. "It's usually at the home when he is home. That is the most recent car he has been driving."

Lee Lull said her ex-husband was a devoted doctor and father but did not seem to be too worried about his security, sometimes leaving his door unlocked in the upscale neighborhood.

"This is so unreal," she said of the slaying, saying she kept in contact with him regularly, and the couple remained close. She discounted that the cherry pits would have been left by her ex-husband.

"I really doubt he would go around spitting cherry seeds around -- he took care of his house," she said. "He would have parties for everybody at the clinic.

"He was a really good man. There aren't a lot of them."

She said she could not fathom why someone would attack him. "I don't think he has any enemies as far as I know of," she said.

Lull had been chief of nuclear medicine at the hospital since 1990 and served as a radiology professor at UC San Francisco.

He had served as president for both the American College of Nuclear Physicians and the San Francisco Medical Society, which he headed in 2002, and served as editor of its journal, San Francisco Medicine, from 1997 to 1999.

Colleagues, friends and neighbors described Lull, a father of two adult sons, as a dedicated doctor who was also friendly and sociable and loved to sail and play tennis.

"He was absolutely adored by the staff," said San Francisco Medical Society Executive Director Dr. Mary Lou Licwinko. "I am just in shock."

"He was quite a guy," said neighbor Barry Kinney. "He was very much a hail-fellow-well-met person." He would jog through the neighborhood or be seen driving the small car, as well as his prized bright red Mercedes and his black Lexus.

Kinney said Lull was committed to his work and research. He once joked: "A little radiation is good for you -- now and then."

Lull focused on improvements in diagnosis and treatment of thyroid cancer. Last year, Lull lectured in San Francisco about the threat of nuclear terrorism.

At San Francisco General Hospital, word of the popular doctor's death swept through on a day that was supposed to be reserved for a morale boosting ice cream social amid budget cuts.

"He was a great guy -- talkative, friendly, dependable,"

said hospital chief executive Gene O'Connell. "He's going to be missed by everyone here. He's not somebody who can be replaced."

"It's been a tremendous shock to all of us at the General," said Dr. Valerie Ng, hospital chief of staff.

Ng said Lull was a highly revered expert in the field of nuclear medicine, a specialty that performs diagnostic screens such as bone scans for cancer patients.

Lull was already renowned in the field when he was recruited to work at San Francisco General in 1990, following the closure of Letterman Army Medical Center in the Presidio. He had been chief of nuclear medicine there since 1976.

"This is a blow, not only to us, but to the field of nuclear medicine," said Ng. "He was an icon to us all. He trained generations of doctors in nuclear medicine."

Ng said hospital staffers had become concerned when the reliable doctor did not show up for work in the morning. "Patients had had studies done, and Bob was needed to interpret them," she said. That triggered the discovery of the body.

Dr. George Susens, who preceded Lull as president of the Medical Society, said Lull prided himself as the first academician from San Francisco General Hospital to be elected to the post. "He had an infectious smile," said Susens, a Kaiser internist. "He was fun to have around."

Medical Society spokesman Steve Heilig said Lull was a thoughtful scientist with a long military background. He favored nuclear power as a solution to global warming, but he was so passionately opposed to the development of proposed "bunker buster" nuclear weapons that he co-sponsored a resolution at the California Medical Association House of Delegates opposing the

technology. The resolution did not pass.

"He was a rigorous scientist, but he had a real open mind," Heilig said. "He liked to learn stuff."

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