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ROXBURY, WATERTOWN

Watertown police hope for justice in homicide of department's 1st black officer

Posted by Matt Rocheleau December 7, 2011 04:21 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Watertown Police said today they hope for justice in the slaying of a former, longtime colleague -- the department's first black police officer -- who was found dead in her Roxbury apartment over the weekend.

Boston Police responding to a call for an "unknown situation" found Gail Miles, 60, unresponsive in her apartment at 8 Wardman Road in Roxbury at about 10:10 a.m. Saturday. She was pronounced dead at the scene by emergency medical workers and a subsequent autopsy ruled Miles' death was a homicide, authorities said yesterday.

Officials at Boston Police, the Suffolk County District Attorney's office and the state medical examiner's office have declined to comment further about the case, including cause of death, "to protect the integrity of the [ongoing] investigation," said district attorney spokesman Jake Wark.

Miles spent her entire 20-year career with the Watertown Police Department's night patrol division before retiring in 2004, according to the department.

Sixteen years after becoming the first black police officer hired in Watertown, Miles made headlines when she sued the city's police department for racial and gender discrimination.

"The men and women of the Watertown Police Department are deeply saddened by the sudden and tragic death of retired Officer Gail Miles," police spokesman Lt. Michael Lawn said in a statement today. "We hope that

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whoever is responsible for the death of Officer Miles is identified and brought to justice soon. We offer our deepest sympathies to the Miles family during this difficult time.”

In a phone interview Sunday night, the victim’s mother, Marilyn Miles, of Mattapan, said of her daughter: “She was a wonderful girl. She had a lot of friends and she loved to travel and socialize.”

Gail Miles lived alone in the apartment in a three-story brick building, according to her mother. The oldest of four siblings, Miles was divorced and had no children, her mother said.

Reached by phone today, Miles’ mother declined to comment.

On Sunday night, she said she had not been told any more details about how her daughter was found or what authorities believe may have caused her death. At the time, police had not ruled Miles’ death a homicide, but her mother said she had a “gut feeling” her daughter had been murdered.

“She didn’t deserve what she got,” the mother said. “She wouldn’t let just anybody in her house. She didn’t have any friends like that.”

Waltham resident Al Siciliano, 58, said he used to drive a taxi in Watertown, and met Miles before she retired through a friend. He said that he, his wife, some of his colleagues and Miles would meet regularly to socialize after they ended their respective late-night Wednesday work shifts.

“She was just a fun-loving person that always made me laugh,” he said by phone today. “She was a great friend. I feel so bad for her. I’m going to miss her. To think that someone killed her really just [angers me].”

In a September 2000 lawsuit, Miles said she had been the victim of discrimination at the police department from the date she was hired. In late 2001, Miles received \$150,000 in a settlement out of court. The settlement contained a stipulation that Watertown Police complete a mandatory officer training program aimed at preventing sexual and racial harassment.

Boston Police have urged anyone with information about Miles' death to contact the Homicide Unit at 617-343-4470. Information can be shared anonymously with police by calling the CrimeStoppers Tip Line at 1-800-494-TIPS or by texting the word ‘TIP’ to CRIME (27463), authorities said.

There have been 59 homicides in Boston this year compared to 73 last year at this time, Boston Police spokesman Eddy Chrispin said.

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