

TRAGIC BUS DEATH STILL UNRESOLVED

Over a year ago, on a blustery cold day on December 29, 1993, a 65-year old Asian woman was riding on a bus, returning home in Newark, New Jersey, when she encountered an unexpected reaction in which a woman bus-rider, misinterpreting kindness for interference, flew into a rage and beat her to death. Neither the bus-driver or passengers responded to help her. The assailant disappeared with a 4-year old child.

The victim was Mrs. Mariko Westbrook, a former Japanese war-bride who married an African American G.I. and came to Newark to make her home. Despite her husband leaving her early in their marriage, Mrs. Westbrook chose to remain in Newark, and raise her Black/Asian son and daughter, Peter and Vivian. Peter grew up to be a champion fencer, having represented the U.S. in 5 Olympic Games.

The case of Mariko Westbrook is almost unknown in the Asian American community. The first publicity around this tragic killing did not appear until March of 1994, and was featured in the Newark edition of the New York Times. The perpetrator is still at-large. The lawyer for the Westbrook family, Attorney Stephen "Skippy" Weinstein, is diligently pursuing avenues to locate the assailant. He mentioned that posters with the assailants description, have been placed in the area of the attack, but there has been no response.

According to the New York Times article by reporter Evelyn Nieves: "Mrs. Westbrook was sitting opposite the driver, next to a large young woman about 5 foot 6 and over 200 pounds. The

woman was with a small girl, maybe 4 years old."

"Mrs. Westbrook noticed that the child was swathed in scarves up to her eyes. She pointed out, in a gentle way, that the girl might feel a bit more comfortable if her bundlings were loosened. This enraged the woman, who cursed her and told her to mind her own business. Mrs. Westbrook evenly replied that she considered all children her children."

"That was all it took for the woman to begin pounding the 65-year old woman who had given her a smile and some advice."

After more than ^{2 dozen} 24 blows to her face, Mrs. Westbrook managed to edge to the door, whereupon the attacker completed her assault with a final kick that sent Mrs. Westbrook flying head-first to the pavement. By-standers on the side-walk called the police. An ambulance arrived in about 25 minutes and rushed her to the hospital. Mrs. Westbrook died three days later. Her son and daughter who were notified immediately, were devastated when they identified their mother. As for the angry woman and the child, they quickly left unnoticed while the police were questioning the other passengers. She has not been seen since.

Attorney Weinstein called the beating "egregious and savage." He explained that if the assailant is not found, there cannot be a criminal trial, but he stated that both the bus driver and the bus company will be held accountable ^{in a civil suit.} He is ^{charging} ~~filing a civil rights suit, including complaints of~~ carelessness, negligence and irresponsibility.

Anyone who can provide any information about this tragedy, may call Atty. Stephen "Skippy" Weinstein at (201) 267-5200.