

Through the woods: Dog tracks missing grandmother



BOB WOODRING

Max, the Michigan State Police tracking dog, saved the life of Mary Ann Lalik, a 96-year-old grandmother who was missing in a woods near her home recently.

Tracker Max has a nose for people — just ask 96-year-old Mary Ann Lalik.

Because Max is such a super sniffer, Mrs. Lalik is safe at home after a harrowing night spent in an insect-infested strip of woods.

Max, a Michigan State Police dog, was called into action last week when Mrs. Lalik apparently wandered into the woods behind her daughter's home on Oporto Street in Livonia.

Up to 10 police officers had searched the area with flashlights for nearly 2½ hours with no luck.

When the first hour of searching turned up nothing, Trooper Kenneth G.

Bennett and Max, from the Pontiac post, were called in.

They arrived about midnight but Max, a 5-year-old German shepherd, had an immediate problem. The police search had left him with too many human smells to trace.

So Bennett cleared the area and Max went on a "free search."

"He's just working the wind and picking up a human scent from the wind," Bennett said.

LITTLE MORE than an hour later, Mrs. Lalik was found 20 feet from a footpath, lying down with a blanket for cover. She was taken to Botsford Hos-

pital in Farmington and released a half-hour later.

"I still can't see how she got there," said Eleanor Parpolowicz, Mrs. Lalik's daughter after the ordeal. The elderly woman has trouble getting around without her walker. She broke her hip four years ago.

"She just wanted to sleep in the woods," Mrs. Parpolowicz said.

"She used to walk in the woods years ago," said Bob Parpolowicz, Mrs. Lalik's grandson. "But she's done nothing like that in the last 10 years."

MRS. LALIK'S ORDEAL began at 9 p.m. June 13. Her family had been away for 3½ hours before returning to

find their grandmother missing.

Livonia police were called.

"At night, it's just pitch black," said officer James Work, among the 10 sergeants and officers who searched the woods. A fire department rescue unit was also on the scene.

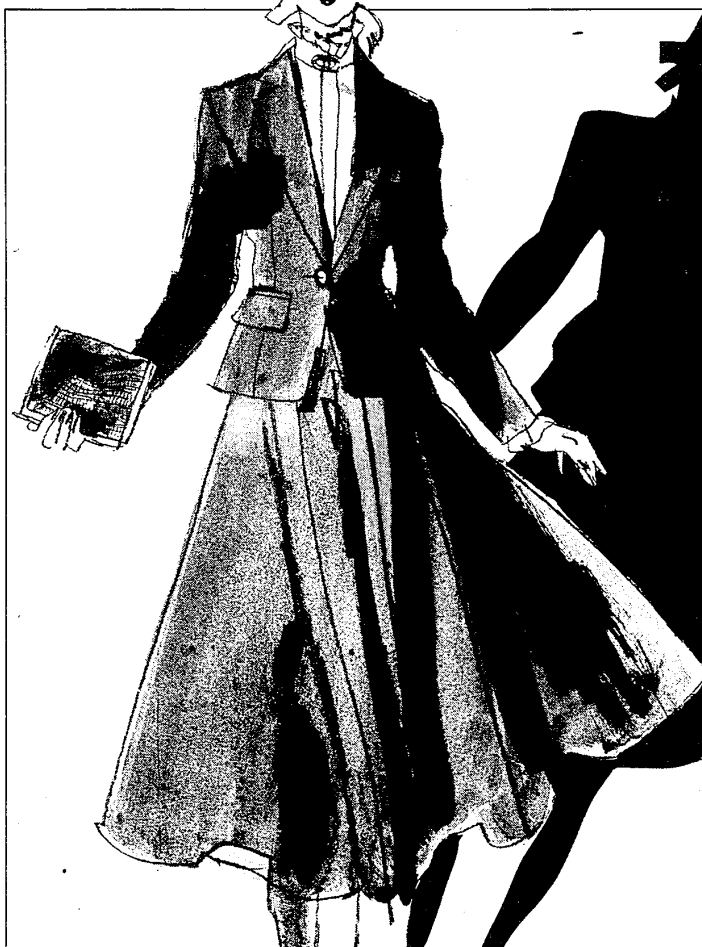
Mrs. Lalik, who only speaks Polish, was treated for exposure to the damp, rainy weather and insect bites.

Work said Max the dog and Bennett probably saved Mrs. Lalik's life. Citing the woman's age and health, Work said she may have not been able to survive the night.

Mrs. Lalik came to the United States nearly 70 years ago. She has lived in Livonia with her family since 1950.

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