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Body is found in missing woman's car

Auto from L.A. turns up in downtown San Diego

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A body was found in the car of a missing Los Angeles-area real estate agent just blocks from San Diego police headquarters yesterday. Authorities are trying to determine if the victim is the woman who vanished a week ago.



DAN TREVAN / Union-Tribune
Mercedes-Benz that belonged to a missing real estate agent, Julia Keller of El Segundo, was found in San Diego yesterday.

The body was discovered in the trunk after the car was found parked by an expired meter downtown, authorities said. The car belongs to Manhattan Beach real estate agent and El Segundo resident Julia "Deede" Buchanan Keller.

A San Diego parking controller saw the silver, four-door 1999 Mercedes-Benz E320 on 11th Avenue near C Street about noon. A license-plate check showed the car belonged to Keller, and police were notified.

Police cordoned off half a city block as they investigated.

Officers from El Segundo and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department were notified immediately, and detectives arrived here yesterday afternoon.

Authorities, friends and concerned residents began searching for Keller, 55, soon after she vanished July 8, leaving her purse in her house and television set on. Her car also was missing.

Her employer, Shorewood Realtors, offered a \$50,000 reward.

El Segundo police had said the disappearance was suspicious. There were no signs of forced entry into the home.

Police questioned Keller's ex-husband, an American Airlines mechanic who flew to Bolivia July 10 to visit a sick relative. He told authorities he knew nothing about the disappearance.



Julia Keller

The missing woman's son, Mike, told authorities that his mother was meticulous and organized, and had uncharacteristically missed several business and social appointments the weekend she disappeared.

She had been dropped off at her home the night of July 8 after a date, police said.