

Nona Katherine Sisco

A 68-year-old violinist with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra who was abducted from the parking lot of her Memphis condominium late Wednesday was found Friday morning in the trunk of her car in Oklahoma City after spending nearly two days there, police said.

Police officers discovered Nona Katherine Sisco curled up inside the trunk of her white 1976 Cadillac shortly before 10 a.m. Friday, said police spokesman Lt. Dave McBride. The car was parked in the 4100 block of Southwest 27.

"She was real stiff and could barely talk," said Steve Pistole, an Oklahoma City police officer. "She talked real low and you had to get up real close to hear her."

Sgt. Mike Burkhart said the woman had on only an overcoat and sweater over her clothes.

Miss Sisco was in good condition late Friday at South Community Hospital, where she was being treated for exposure, hospital officials said.

Since Wednesday night, temperatures had dropped to around 18 degrees while Miss Sisco was inside the trunk of her car. At the time she was rescued, the temperature was in the low 20s.

"Medically, she's quite good but she's awfully confused," said Dr. Stuart Meyer, a hospital emergency room physician. "She has a few bruises and we're hoping her confusion and sensory deprivation will clear up with some rest."

Two men, Ronald Edward Walker, 23, of Memphis, and Robert Stevenson Peel, 30, of Little Rock, were booked into the Oklahoma City Jail Friday morning on one complaint each of kidnapping.

The two were being kept in the custody of city police after federal authorities elected to let Tennessee officials pursue the case. Peel and Walker are awaiting extradition to Tennessee.

Late Friday, local authorities issued a bulletin for a third man in the kidnapping. The man was thought to be named "Val" or "Valentino," in his 20s, five feet, nine inches tall and staying in the area around Northeast 2 and Stiles, police said.

Capt. Clyde Keenan, with the Memphis Police Department, said Miss Sisco, a violinist and charter member of the Memphis Symphony since 1951, was reported missing after she failed to attend an evening symphony practice on Wednesday.

Police, Keenan said, think Miss Sisco was kidnapped between 6:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. during a robbery and car theft at her Memphis condominium.

He said police found Miss Sisco's glasses in her parking space at the condominium. "There was a car directly behind where hers was that looked like it had been hit pretty hard by someone falling," he said.

"There were paint chips on the ground."

A \$10,000 reward was offered by the Memphis Symphony for her return and a massive air and ground search was launched by the police.

McBride said two Memphis detectives were expected to arrive in Oklahoma City today.

McBride said authorities think Walker and the third man left Memphis in Miss Sisco's car, picking up Peel in Little Rock, Ark. However, witnesses who saw the car near the Oklahoma-Arkansas border told The Oklahoman they remember seeing only two men.

McBride said police were led to Miss Sisco after an Oklahoma City man, who met Walker and Peel here, told police he thought a body was in the trunk of the car. Police declined to release the man's name at his request.

"He had occasion to ride in the car last night (Thursday), and heard some noises coming from the car," McBride said. "They gave him some excuse and he didn't think any more of it," until Friday morning.

Walker and Peel met with the man again Friday morning, and said they needed money quickly, McBride said. The man told them to go to the Sooner Plasma Center, at SW 29 and Dumas.

"He became suspicious when they parked the car an inordinate distance from the blood bank," McBride said. The man asked Walker and Peel why and was reportedly told "we don't want anybody to find the body in the trunk."

While the two suspects were inside the plasma center, the informant told Officer Pistole what he had heard. Taking the man with him, Pistole went to the car, which was parked on the side street about a half-mile from the plasma center.

Tapping on the trunk lid, the officer determined there was someone inside.

Sgt. Burkhart said the woman told police that, during her ordeal, she was allowed out of the trunk once and placed in another car when she complained about the cold. "She said she mostly kept warm by shifting into different positions in the trunk with just about a foot to move around in," Burkhart said.

Walker and Peel were "apparently waiting for her to die," Burkhart said. "They had asked an informant if he knew of some place, they could bury a body."

Eugenia Williams, assistant manager at the plasma center, said Peel attempted to give blood Friday morning but was rejected for "disciplinary reasons.

"That has to do with attitude, actions, the way they talk to you," she said.

She said Peel "acted strange." She had no record of Walker, but said he came inside the business. Both men were in the center about 30 minutes, she said.

McBride said a 1928 Memphis State University class ring, a watch, about \$20 and Miss Sisco's \$20,000 Nicalo Gagliano violin were taken from the woman in the kidnapping.

Authorities said the violin was sold for \$35 in "gas money" Thursday afternoon at E.D. Edwards

Enterprises, a pawn shop and appliance store in Roland, OK. The FBI recovered the violin about 3 p.m. Friday.

"This guy came in and said he wanted to sell me an old fiddle and he wanted \$35 for it," said pawn shop owner E.D. Edwards. "He asked me if I wanted to look at it. I said it wouldn't do me any good 'cause I don't know anything about 'em."

Edwards said a second man stayed in the car while the transaction took place. He said he had no idea of the violin's worth when he bought it.

"The FBI man that was here today said he would be around tomorrow to pick it up. I said, "Buddy, if that thing is worth \$20,000, you come back now and get it.' I wasn't going to keep that thing here overnight.

"I sure didn't think it was worth anything like that," Edwards said. "If someone would have come in and given me \$75 or \$80 for it, they'd have bought 'em a fiddle."