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REPORT

A NEVERENDING JOURNEY...

From Associated Press

A twenty-year-old Japanese student was found dead in his dormitory room Sunday evening, an apparent suicide.

College officials said Ryuta Takeyama, a freshman from Saitama, a Tokyo suburb, apparently hanged himself in a closet in his dorm room. Dr. F.B. Jones, a Madison County medical examiner, viewed the scene and sent the body to the state medical examiners office in Chapel Hill for an autopsy.

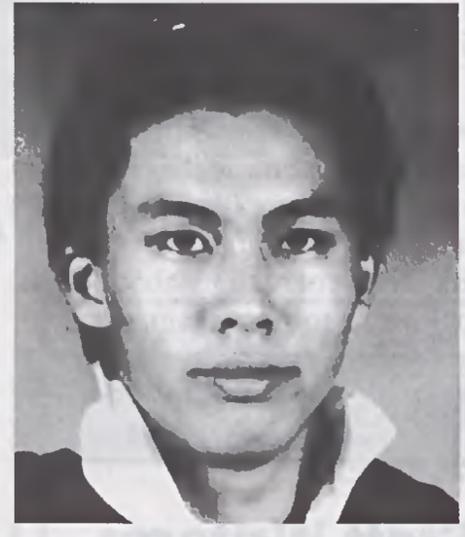
According to Craig Goforth, the colleges director of safety and security, State Bureau of Investigation examined the boy's room late Sunday evening. They searched for but did not find a suicide note. They also interviewed about twenty persons, many of them residents of the dorm. Verbally the SBI agreed with the medical examiner's preliminary that it was an apparent suicide, but they said that official ruling would have to await receipt from the autopsy report.

Several of Takeyama's friends expressed concern late last week over not having seen him since Wednesday. His room was checked on at least two occasions, but the closet was not opened. A more thorough search on Sunday led to the horrible discovery.

After the body was found and the news circulated on the campus, college counselors, medical personnel, several faculty members, and security officers worked throughout the night with the students in the residence hall

where Takeyama lived and with other of his friends. Follow-up sessions were scheduled for Monday and Tuesday.

Parents of the deceased were notified by Dr. Jon Crawford, Director of International Education, who is personally acquainted with the father, a Tokyo businessman. Members of the family flew to the U.S on Wednesday to claim the body and make further arrangement, said Crawford.



Dr. Fred Bently, president of the college, was on the scene late into the night Sunday and participated in follow-up activities on Monday.

"The entire college family is devastated by this tragedy," he said, "and we are doing all we can to be of assistance and comfort to Ryuta's family and to his friends here on campus. He was an outgoing, polite young man who seemed to be adjusting to his new environment. He was well-liked by his peers, both American and Japanese."

Although he had been born in Venezuela, Takeyama was a Japanese citizen and had lived in the Tokyo area most of his life. He attended Toshima Gakuin Senior High School in Tokyo, where he had been an excellent swimmer, active in student government, and earned a black belt in the Japanese art of self-defense.

After graduation there in March 1993, he came to the United States to attend college under the auspices of the International Education Systems, an agency which places Japanese students in private American colleges. He attended a summer institute at Fort Lewis College in Durango, CO, to prepare himself for his college studies by taking a course in English as a second language. He came to Mars Hill in August 1993, was enrolled throughout the 1993-1994 school year, and had completed his third semester last month. He had registered for the '95 spring term last week but

apparently did not attend any classes, which began on the 18th. Up to that point he had taken general education classes and had yet to declare a major.

The college currently has 37 international students enrolled. Eighteen of those are from Japan. There was speculation that Takeyama's death may somehow have been related to the recent tragic earthquake in Kobe, Japan; but no evidence has been found of such a connection.

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