

## Missing Fil-Am found dead in her condo

Written by Administrator  
Saturday, 05 March 2011 21:05

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### **The late Zenia Costales Castillo.**

A body of a Filipino-American woman was discovered badly decomposed inside her Washington, D.C. condo after friends and neighbors reported they hadn't seen her for the past two months.

Grace Valera-Jaramillo, executive director of the Migrant Heritage Commission (MHC), identified the woman as Zenia Costales Castillo, 50, a naturalized American citizen.

Castillo reportedly lived alone in a condominium apartment at the 5400 block of Connecticut Avenue NW.

She was last seen alive in December 2010, according to friends.

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Valera-Jaramillo said police found the petite Fil-Am woman seated in a sofa chair and indications point she died of natural causes although investigation is underway to determine the exact cause of death.

Valera-Jaramillo quoted Castillo's Fil-Am neighbors as saying that they tried to check on her whereabouts but could not convince the building manager to open her apartment.

A close friend, Yden Ayap, who recently arrived from Manila held a duplicate key to the unit, but they discovered that Castillo had changed her locks.

Friends have been trying to contact Castillo's Cagayan-born mother who now lives in London.

Valera-Jaramillo, however, said Castillo's mother, now Mrs. Rosalina Connolly, has dementia.

Castillo's father Benjamin, a native of Nueva Ecija, died several years ago.

Castillo was the youngest of four sisters and had remained single all her life.

Her three siblings — Rosemary, Evelyn and Corazon — are all married and living in the Philippines.

They have already been informed of Castillo's death, Valera-Jaramillo said.

"If you know of Filipino friends or neighbors who live alone, it would be good to reach out to them once in a while," Valera-Jaramillo appealed.

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“Most of them may have chosen to be on their own but a little encouragement for people to reach out could save lives.”

According to Yden Ayap, Castillo used to work for a Filipino diplomat in the early 80s in Egypt and might have also been hired locally at the Philippine Embassy there and then was referred to an American diplomat for employment.

Castillo was brought to the U.S. by her American diplomat employer and thereafter was released after her contract expired.

Ayap said she helped her look for another family to sponsor Castillo until she landed a job as a service staffer in two retirement homes.

“She focused mainly on her work to financially help her sisters and their families back home and did not associate much with Filipino neighbors and rarely attended Filipino community events,” Valera-Jaramillo said of Castillo.

“The only listed person in the apartment administration records to be contacted in case of emergency was her closest friend, Ms. Yden Ayap, who on vacation in the Philippines for almost two months when Zenia Castillo was missing.”

According to reports, Castillo’s employers and friends started wondering about her absence as soon as she did not report for work between Dec. 6 and 10, 2010 in Georgetown.

The matter was first reported to the police on Dec. 14.

The police, however, was not able to get into her condo unit because Castillo had changed her locks.

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Another attempt to enter the unit was made by the police on Dec. 17 but to no avail.

A letter from the building manager was slipped under Castillo's door advising her that the police will break the door open if she failed to respond.

It was only upon the return of Ayap from the Philippines that Castillo's condo unit was finally opened with the help of a locksmith.

As soon as the door opened — it was actually chained and double locked from the inside — the foul smell permeated the air and so Ayap and the building manager called the police.

Due to the condition of Castillo's remains, the medical examiner's office is still in the process of identifying the body in accordance with the government regulations, Valera-Jaramillo said.

Authorities are searching for dental records and will only release the body to the closest kin once it is positively identified as that of Castillo's.

The Migrant Heritage Commission has asked the public in the metropolitan D.C. area for any information that may help to obtain Castillo's dental records.

Contact any of the three MHC executive directors for helpful tips:

Grace Valera-Jaramillo, Jesse Gatchalian or Arnedo S. Valera, Esq. at 202.247.0117, 202.631.8856 or 703.273.1196 or send an e-mail to: [migrantheritage@gmail.com](mailto:migrantheritage@gmail.com)