

2-8-63

No new clues in fire death

More than 1,500 man hours of investigative work since the Oct. 10 death of Lucille E. DeVries, 22, in her burning car in Mason City have failed to reveal either evidence of foul play or the answers to some questions in the case.

Officials have approved release of some details of the investigation which had been kept confidential at the request of County Atty. David J. Butler.

There so far have been several acquaintances of Miss DeVries given lie detector tests at Des Moines, and several more are being scheduled for testing. However, nothing new has been uncovered as a result of tests so far.

Police and fire department men have been working on the investigation since the night Miss DeVries body was found in

her burning car by her home at 607½ 3rd NE. From 75 to 100 persons have been interviewed.

State fire marshal's office personnel have given help since the time of the fire, and an agent of the Iowa Bureau of Criminal Investigation has been assisting since Jan. 7. The county attorney has had an active part also.

Two laboratory tests made early in the case showed the presence of an unsaturated carbon residue in the car. However, the tests are inconclusive, since such residue could be from certain types of flammable liquid or, just as easily, from clothing and material in the interior of the car. Tests did rule out any presence of petroleum products that could have speeded fire.

The major questions are as to Miss DeVries' activities for about 1½ hours before the fire was discovered, investigators said, and why the fire apparently reached the intensity it did within about a half hour. There are, of course, dozens of possible answers which would not be connected with foul play.

On the other hand, investigators must act on the basis that there could have been foul play, although medical evidence does not reveal it.

Some questions that appeared at first have been answered or found to be of no apparent significance, it was reported.

A good deal of the initial investigation was in outlining Miss DeVries' own background —without help to the case so far. It revealed no problems, enemies, jealousies, depression or other factors that would help account for death by other than accident, officers said.