

Man charged in connection with Pa. student's death

By The Associated Press

A 21-year-old New York man was charged with murder in connection with the death of his on-again, off-again girlfriend, a 20-year-old dance major at Mercyhurst College in Erie, Pa., a prosecutor said Saturday.

Onondaga County District Attorney William Fitzpatrick said 21-year-old Steven Pieper of Liverpool, N.Y., was charged with murder in the death of Jenni-Lyn Watson.

Pieper pleaded not guilty

Saturday night at his initial appearance in Clay town court.

Watson went missing last Friday, a day after arriving at her family's home north of Syracuse.

The arrest came hours after searchers combing through woods for any sign of Watson found the body of a woman believed to be the missing student covered in debris behind a storage shed in a swampy area of Clay Central Park, Fitzpatrick said.

Fitzpatrick said the remains have not been positively identified. However, they were consistent

in age and race with Watson, he said.

Watson's parents have been notified.

An autopsy was expected to be performed Sunday to determine the cause of death, he said.

Pieper was held without bail because of the seriousness of the charge, Fitzpatrick told the Syracuse Post-Standard.

Pieper did not have a phone number listed at his home address.

A message left at a relative's house was not immediately

"We do not believe she left that house alive."

William Fitzpatrick

Onondaga County district attorney

returned Saturday. It was unclear whether Pieper had an attorney.

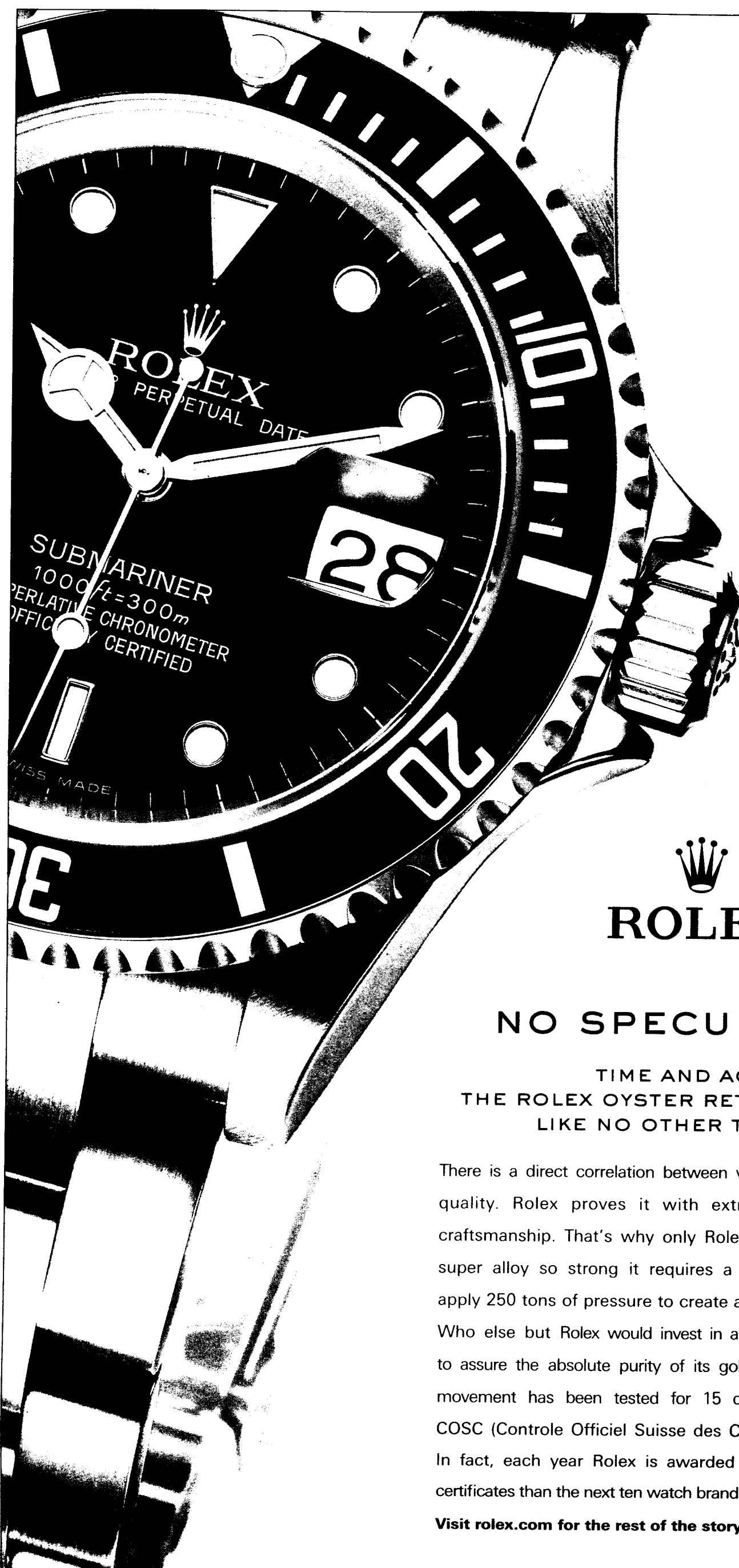
Eden Mishler, a dance major who met Watson three years ago during her freshman year at Mercyhurst College, told The Associated Press that she had met Pieper several times.

But, she said, she didn't know him that well.

Fitzpatrick said Pieper was upset when Watson tried to end their relationship in early October.

He said investigators believe Watson was killed at her parents' house on Nov. 19, and her body was "dumped, frankly, like garbage," in the park.

"We do not believe she left that house alive," Fitzpatrick said.



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