

## Rochester man found dead Saturday was strangled

**By David Galante**

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The death of a Bay Street man, whose body was found in his apartment Saturday, is being investigated as a homicide, Rochester police said yesterday.

The death of Howard Birx, 59, of 950 Bay St. was originally called "suspicious." But an autopsy yesterday showed the cause of death as strangulation, said a spokesman for the Monroe County medical examiner's office.

Investigator James T. Verna of the Rochester Police Department's

Physical Crimes Unit said it was too early in the investigation for police to comment on the case. He said no motive has been established.

But Birx' brother, Harry Birx of East Bloomfield, Ontario County, said he and other family members suspect the motive was robbery.

"This is a shock for us," Birx said. "My brother never hurt anyone or bothered anybody in his life. He wouldn't hurt a mouse. We think someone followed him home just for a couple of bucks. That's all he had."

Birx, a farmer, said his brother was born and raised in East Bloomfield, but lived in Rochester in various apartments since he was released from the Army about 40 years ago. He said his brother lived in the apartment on Bay Street about a year.

Howard Birx worked in a bank before entering the service, serving in World War II. He lived off a government pension since being discharged, his brother said.

"After the Army, he just wasn't the same," Birx said. "He was de-

spondent most of the time. He was happy as a kid. But the service changed him."

Birx said his brother often traveled to East Bloomfield to visit, and last saw him 10 days ago.

"We talked about when we were kids," Birx said. "It seems that's the only thing that made him happy was remembering when he was a kid."

Birx is also survived by three sisters, Jane Hampson, Mary B. Hawkins and Henrietta Schafford, all from Rochester.

