

Alcohol and a Drug Traced as Causes Of Kilgallen Death

Dorothy Kilgallen, the newspaper columnist and television personality, died last week from the reaction of a combination of alcohol and barbiturates, the Medical Examiner's office said yesterday.

Dr. James L. Luke, assistant examiner, added that the circumstances under which Miss Kilgallen died were "undetermined." The police said there was no indication of violence or suicide.

The official medical report of the office, which examines all unusual deaths in the city, said she died last Monday of "acute ethanol and barbiturate intoxication." Ethanol is a medical term for alcohol.

Dr. Luke noted that the quantities of alcohol and barbiturates in her bloodstream had not been excessive, but he added that the combination had caused a fatal "depression on the central nervous system, which in turn caused her heart to stop."

Miss Kilgallen, who was 52 years old, was found dead in her five-story town house at 45 East 68th Street. Her death had been tentatively ascribed to "natural causes."

Dr. Luke emphasized in a telephone interview that the overdose could well have been accidental. He said that no notes had been found and that there had been no other indication that the celebrity planned to take her life.

"It could have simply been an extra pill," he said. "We really don't know. All we know is that depressants such as alcohol and barbiturates one on top of another are dangerous."

Dr. Luke added that a person succumbing to such a combination would die peacefully in a coma.