



Crisis of a missing person and the familys search
by Kathryn Koger Jodan

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract:

A member who has disappeared may precipitate an urgent crisis in a family , and with one million persons reported missing each year among the total population of the United States and Canada, this hurtful family problem becomes a serious social problem approaching the magnitude of a national-crisis.

An investigation was made to determine and evaluate the existing organized agencies whose purpose is to lend assistance to families in the form of search and counseling. Based on a case study involving personal experience,1 added insights were gained into a family's experience of disorientation when a member leaves suddenly.

A continuing and frustrating problem facing the family may be the question of the thoroughness of the agency because of lack of understanding of their purpose, procedures they, use, and failure of the agencies to disclose information on what has been done. Data was collected and tabulated on the aid rendered by government, professional, and charitable agencies and an analysis was made of the extent of each agency's involvement and the kinds of, cases each accepts.

The emphasis in this study was on missing youth. It was found that a few agencies have realized the opportunity that is offered for -counseling the family for the return and reconciliation, besides conducting a search. They have helped both the runaway and other members recognize the causes of alienation and the need to build new empathy and understanding so a member will never, again want to "lose" his family.

It was concluded that families and agencies both should be encouraged to continue a search. Some may not want to be "found" but many who have left home want to return, although they feel trapped in their decision by pride or despair. Whether or not a family should continue a search is voiced in one runaway youth's poignant letter ". . . keep looking." The investigation suggests further need for more direction- in the establishment of a national clearing house for information and in providing readily available counseling services to prevent troubled persons from us-ing disappearance as a solution to family problems.

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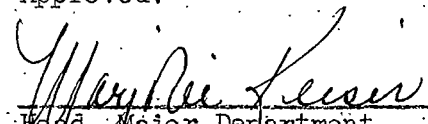
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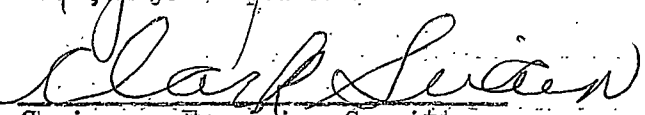
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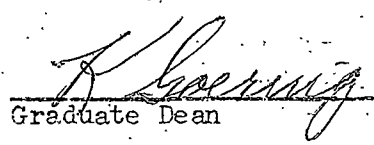
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Approved:


Head, Major Department


Chairman, Examining Committee


Graduate Dean

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Importance of the Study	1
Purpose of the Study	2
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	4
Historical	4
Definitions	5
Relation to Previous Studies	8
III. PROCEDURES	11
Sample	12
Methodology	12
IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA	14
Case Study -- Kevin Russell Wellcome	14
Background and History	14
The Disappearance	17
The Search	20
Family Adjustment	24
Analysis of Crisis -- Comparison with Literature	26
The Boy	26
The Family	27
Agencies Investigated	29
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	49
Summary	49
Conclusions	50
Recommendations	51
APPENDIXES	
Appendix A -- Questionnaire, Instructions, Cover Letter	55
Appendix B -- Agencies Sent Questionnaires	60
Appendix C -- Sample Inquiry Forms	63
Appendix D -- Sample Page Police Bulletin	69
LITERATURE CITED	71

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
1. AGENCY QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES	30
2. TYPES OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND KINDS OF ASSISTANCE GIVEN IN SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSONS	32
3. TYPES OF PRIVATE PROFESSIONAL AND COMMERCIAL AGENCIES AND KINDS OF ASSISTANCE GIVEN IN SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSONS	34
4. TYPES OF BENEVOLENT SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES AND KINDS OF ASSISTANCE GIVEN IN SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSONS	37
5. DEFINITION OF THOSE MISSING PERSONS CASES ACCEPTED FOR SEARCHING AND THOSE NOT ACCEPTED, BY AGENCY	38
6. DEFINITION OF THOSE MISSING PERSONS CASES ACCEPTED FOR SEARCHING AND THOSE NOT ACCEPTED, BY AGENCY	40
7. DEFINITION OF THOSE MISSING PERSONS CASES ACCEPTED FOR SEARCHING AND THOSE NOT ACCEPTED, BY AGENCY	41
8. REPORTS BY AGENCIES ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATING SOCIETIES LAW-ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION, AND SEARCHES CONDUCTED INTERNATIONALLY	42
9. NUMBER OF AGENCIES REPORTING USE OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING MEDIA TO EXPEDITE SEARCHING FOR MISSING PERSONS	43
10. HOW OFTEN PROGRESS OF THE SEARCH IS REPORTED TO FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS	45
11. REPORTS OF HOW LONG THE AGENCY WILL CONTINUE A SEARCH	46
12. REPORTS OF NUMBER OF MISSING PERSONS FOUND COMPARED TO SEARCHES UNDERTAKEN	47
13. AGENCIES REPORTING OPINIONS ON QUESTIONS OF FORMING A NATIONAL CLEARING HOUSE OF INFORMATION OR ADDITIONAL LEGISLATION IN REGARD TO FACILITATING SEARCHES	48

ABSTRACT

A member who has disappeared may precipitate an urgent crisis in a family, and with one million persons reported missing each year among the total population of the United States and Canada, this hurtful family problem becomes a serious social problem approaching the magnitude of a national crisis.

An investigation was made to determine and evaluate the existing organized agencies whose purpose is to lend assistance to families in the form of search and counseling. Based on a case study involving personal experience, added insights were gained into a family's experience of disorientation when a member leaves suddenly.

A continuing and frustrating problem facing the family may be the question of the thoroughness of the agency because of lack of understanding of their purpose, procedures they use, and failure of the agencies to disclose information on what has been done. Data was collected and tabulated on the aid rendered by government, professional, and charitable agencies and an analysis was made of the extent of each agency's involvement and the kinds of cases each accepts.

The emphasis in this study was on missing youth. It was found that a few agencies have realized the opportunity that is offered for counseling the family for the return and reconciliation, besides conducting a search. They have helped both the runaway and other members recognize the causes of alienation and the need to build new empathy and understanding so a member will never again want to "lose" his family.

It was concluded that families and agencies both should be encouraged to continue a search. Some may not want to be "found" but many who have left home want to return, although they feel trapped in their decision by pride or despair. Whether or not a family should continue a search is voiced in one runaway youth's poignant letter ". . . keep looking."

The investigation suggests further need for more direction in the establishment of a national clearing house for information and in providing readily available counseling services to prevent troubled persons from using disappearance as a solution to family problems.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Importance of the Study

Crises in families may be precipitated by many factors--accidents causing injuries, birth of a baby, a crime committed, hospitalization or death of a member, or a sudden unexplained absence. When a family member is missing, serious and urgent questions are raised in regard to locating him. What procedures should be initiated? What follow-up is necessary? From what agency should the family seek help?

There is little documented evidence of how to trace a missing person. Lack of data underscores the need for obtaining much more information on an important social problem as well as a distressing and hurtful one for families during this crisis.

Studies have reported facts on the missing-persons problem since the early 1900's, while legal provisions had been set up three hundred years before that in English common law to solve perplexing problems left in the wake of a "lost person."

Among the total population of the United States and Canada the problem of a missing person emerges as a serious personal, as well as social, concern. These persons may include the truant from school, the family deserter (wife or husband), or the military evader. They all have in common the element of "disappearance" from habitual surroundings and activities. The ratio of missing persons to the United States population is 1 : 400.

Visualized another way, a typical small city of 20,000 persons could have as many as fifty individuals whose whereabouts are unknown.

Police interest has evolved out of public concern for the welfare and safety of missing persons, and law enforcement agencies, therefore, assume certain responsibilities for tracing missing persons. Voluntary social welfare agencies, law enforcement bureaus of missing persons, and private professional agencies are all sources of help in locating a missing member.

In recent years investigators estimate the problem of missing persons is increasing so rapidly that it is already approaching the status of a national crisis, especially the rates reported for runaway juveniles. There is conjecture as to whether much of this trend among teenagers is due to a natural desire to escape the conflict of adapting to the environment or a "bent" toward adventure. There is concensus among writers, however, that it is a dangerous situation, especially for youth. It is doubtful that there are any parents of missing children who would not agree with these writers.

While many want to be found, those who have disappeared may feel trapped in their decision, either through pride or despair. The family wants to be assured of the health and safety of the absent member even if it may mean accepting the condition that he may not want to return or that his welfare may best be served by not revealing his whereabouts.

Purpose of the Study

Unless there is reason to suspect fugues, murder, suicide, kidnapping or an accident, concern for the missing person rests with relatives, associates and friends and with the police.

Personal experience helped establish a need for data which would give specific guidelines to a family who experiences the sudden loss of a member as well as give accurate information and understanding of the aid various agencies render. There seems to be no investigative studies relating to the effectiveness of agencies nor data compiled to determine how these agencies function in aiding a family with this crisis problem. A lack of knowledge of the thoroughness of the agency may be a continuing source of frustration to the family through lack of understanding of the agency's purpose, procedures involved, or lack of disclosure of information by the agency on what has been done in a search.

In this study the investigator has reviewed the case of a missing person. This serves to show a family's experiences. In addition, a survey of methods of search has been made so that any family can understand the type and extent of services it can expect from the law enforcement, private professional, and social agencies.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Historical

Historically, missing persons have provided endless legends. Stories of famous disappearances such as Clapp's Vanishing Point¹ and Churchill's They Never Came Back² are accounts of unresolved cases and long-standing mysteries. Records as far back as the early 1900's have been kept on why people disappear and never return.³

It is estimated that at least 500,000 persons annually are reported missing to United States law enforcement officials. Police departments are pressed by a growing demand for aid in their location. The extent to which people are missing is shown in a 1965 study by Rubin.⁴ A report from the Director of the Montreal, Canada, City Police Department stated that in 1964 an average of 413 persons were listed missing each month of that year. In that same year, Los Angeles reported 7,897 persons of all ages were missing. Missing persons reported to the Atlanta Police Department for the 1959-1964 period included 2,981 juveniles and the chilling figure of 91 children from

¹Jane Clapp, Vanishing Point (New York: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1961).

²Allen Churchill, They Never Came Back (New York: Doubleday, 1960).

³Concerning London 1907-1912, "Why People Disappear," Literary Digest, LXVI, 922-924.

⁴Ernest Rubin, "On Missing Persons and Missing Tabulations," The American Statistician, October, 1965, pp. 33-36.

ages 1 to 5.9 years, plus 2,157 adults from 17 years up. The median age for juveniles was 13.4 years and for adults 30.3 years.

In 1967, a total of 1,000,000 persons were officially reported missing.⁵ It was Franzmeier's belief that the number of Americans who disappeared last year and the physical and emotional hardship they caused those they left behind has elevated the missing-persons problem to the status of a national crisis.

On the other hand, Fraenkel maintained that it is not easy to stay "lost." Our many facilities for tracing missing persons (television, radio, telephone, telegraph, teletype, photographs, newspapers) have aided police who use all of these media. Thus, they are able to efficiently coordinate their efforts. He writes of the problem, "It may be estimated that not more than 200, who are not found by search, disappear yearly in the United States in times of peace . . . without a trace. One hundred times as many were missing in action from the armed forces during three years of World War II. One hundred times as many Jews disappeared in the three years from the fall of 1941 to the fall of 1944. The proportional figures are 1 : 100 : 10,000."⁶

Definitions

Studies require that missing persons be distinguished from runaways. A study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health focused on the

⁵Stephen A. Franzmeier, "Why Husbands - and Teen-agers Run Away From Home," Family Weekly, July 23, 1967, pp. 6-7.

⁶Franz Fraenkel, Missing Persons: The Law in United States and Europe (New York: Oceana Publications, 1950), p. 57.

"intent of the runaway." The definition evolved was "the runaway is the child who leaves home with the knowledge that he will be missed."⁷ He is found or returns home voluntarily to the effective control and surveillance of the parents as well as to the security of the home.

What is a missing person? Ringold states that every child thinks about running away, many even threaten it, but there may never be a complete record of the number who do because many cases go unreported.⁸ Of those cases relating to runaway youth, Hildebrand shows an increase of 51 per cent over the ten-year period of 1950 to 1960 in New York City alone.⁹ A ten per cent higher rate for 1967 reported 225,000 teen-agers as runaways. Of these juvenile runaways 90,246 were arrested by United States law enforcement officers, and almost half of them were girls. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports showed this as an increase of almost 10 per cent from 1966.

The Lowrey study of those who were officially classed as runaways with the New York Travelers Aid Society showed that the age range extended from 6 to 102 years. It was in contrast to other agencies that probably would not have classed as runaways those over 21, or perhaps even 18. Their argument stated, "If older individuals are absent from accustomed surroun-

⁷Robert Shellow, Julian Schamp, Elliott Liebow, and Elizabeth Norger, Suburban Runaways of the 1960's, Monograph of the Society for Research in Child Development, Serial 111, 1067, Vol. 32, No. 3.

⁸Evelyn S. Ringold, "Why They Run Away From Home," New York Times Magazine, May 10, 1964, pp. 63-64.

⁹James A. Hildebrand, "Why Runaways Leave Home," Police Science, LIV, (1963), 211-216.

dings with consent or knowledge, particularly if incapacitated in any way, they are so classified."¹⁰

It can be noted, therefore, that "the universe or population of 'missing persons' reported to police officials is not a precisely defined aggregate."¹¹ Rubin pointed out that there are variations in definitions from one large metropolitan area police department to another and almost all police departments separate adults and juveniles, highly concentrating their efforts on finding a missing child. Kansas City, Kansas, police reported that a person is considered missing if he or she "has been absent for 24 hours without sufficient reason." Buffalo police stated that:

A missing person is one missing from his or her usual place of abode (including institutions) under circumstances not consistent with his ordinary habits, or who may be in need of police assistance by reason of age, infirmity, physical or mental handicap, or the possibility of foul play or accident.

When a person is missing for a significant period, can he be declared legally dead? The English courts formulated the common law on presumption of death in 1604: "If it is proved that for a period of not less than 7 years no news of a person has been received by those who would naturally hear of him if he were alive, and that such inquiries and searches as circumstances naturally suggested have been made, there arises a legal presumption that he is dead."¹² Pertaining to the present day the same author

¹⁰Lawson G. Lowrey, "Runaways and Nomads," American Journal of Psychiatry, II, (1941), 775-783.

¹¹Rubin, "Missing Persons and Tabulations."

¹²Fraenkel, Missing Persons, p. 5 (13 Halsbury's Laws of England 630).

referring to need for search on Presumption of Death for legal proceedings, writes:

The best form of instruction would be to require a finding that the absent person's abandonment of his home, desertion of his friends and concealment of his whereabouts from them, in connection with his age, health, disposition, moral character, social rank, financial condition, objects and aims in life, together with all other facts and circumstances in evidence, were inconsistent with his voluntary absence (70 F. 2d 569). Inquiry is to be made with the police departments, Bureaus of Missing Persons and appropriate cases with the corresponding agencies of the Army and Navy. Even a slender purse will be no excuse for omitting such requests.

Relation to Previous Studies

The interest for this study is in missing youth. An interpretation of why adolescents run away should be considered. It is important to keep in mind that the escape the adolescent seeks from conflict is an escape that leads to some sort of solution, some sort of adaptation, "a tentative attempt to fit into an environment not of the adolescent's creation. This point of view may be faulty and the judgments may be wrong but they are all that he has. This is not a sketch of the world as it is but of the world that the adolescent sees."¹³ One of the adjustments with escape "can now be scrutinized."

In almost all adolescents from time to time there is a distinct tendency to flee the environment, to run away from it. This running away is not used here in any mythical or figurative sense but is an actual physical

¹³Sidney I. Schwab and Borden S. Veeder, The Adolescent: His Conflicts and Escapes (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1929), pp. 257-279, passim.

piece of conduct which often is a surprising and startling experience for parents and others concerned. It is difficult to see why this sort of solution is not more common, because the means of accomplishing it are so simple and the impulse to run away is so logical. Between running away and slow and painful adaptation, the choice would always seem to favor the first. The more active and pleasanter performance of cutting loose (an answer to one of the most primitive of all impulses, that of flight in the face of environmental difficulties) would seem the most natural thing in the world. Many of the escapes are futile, unsuccessful, and some of them, though not many, end in disaster. By going back on a false trail the true path is often found.

Wattenberg found in his large study of runaway boys that the main motivation was search for adventure and, perhaps, a strong desire for independence. He also found that with the return families rallied their forces and better relationships with sons resulted.

Although Shellow does not exclude the possibility of individual disturbed and disorganized pathological behavior as a factor in running away, a conclusion was that these runaways "have taken the initiative"; it is a part of their "inept attempt to escape from the nowhere of adolescence."¹⁴

Although psychological studies of runaways are fairly numerous and articles in popular magazines on this problem are increasing, there seems to be little documented evidence of how to trace missing persons. But whether to or not is summed up by a reader of one magazine:

Sirs: Your article [Runaway Kids]¹⁵ is very real. I was a runaway, too. I have one thing to say. . . .

¹⁴Shellow, and others, Suburban Runaways, Monograph.

¹⁵"Runaway Kids," Life, November 3, 1967, pp. 19-29.

- 10 -

Keep looking for your daughter or son. They want
to be found.

Corky Crandall
Cambridge, Mass.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Unless there is reason to suspect fugues, murder, suicide, kidnapping or an accident, concern for the missing person rests with relatives, associates and friends, and with the police.

Personal experience helped establish a need for data which would give specific guidelines to a family who experiences the sudden loss of a member as well as give accurate information and understanding of the aid various agencies render. There seems to be no investigative studies relating to the effectiveness of agencies nor data compiled to determine how the agencies function in aiding a family with this crisis problem. A lack of knowledge of the thoroughness of the agency may be a continuing source of frustration to the family through lack of understanding of the agency's purpose, procedures involved, or lack of disclosure of information by the agency on what has been done in a search.

In this study the investigator has reviewed the case of a missing person. This serves to show a family's experiences. In addition, a survey of methods of search has been made so that any family can understand the type and extent of services it can expect from the law enforcement, private professional, and social agencies.

The orientation of the investigator has been involvement in a personal survey beginning at the onset of the episode presented in the case study. An attempt has been made to utilize the strengths of the data that

had been obtained in a personal search, combined with the immediate data obtained through thesis investigation. The two main areas of information gathered were: (1) on the crisis state of a family experiencing a missing member, the typical phases which characterize the period of upset but which were supplementary to it; (2) on the type and extent of aid various agencies are able to render to a family in this crisis, through a questionnaire with a set of questions asked (see Appendix A) which served as the source of comparative data. The obtained sample expanded from three representative types specifically to include as many agencies as possible, categorized as law enforcement, private professional, and benevolent social service organizations. In a few instances some subject areas were covered by unstructured interview. This interview approach was limited, however, to those who were willing to give unusual and, at times, confidential information.

Sample

Several agencies were preselected in that these specific ones were participating in the search referred to in the case study. Others were selected from references found in background literature as individuals representing agencies working with missing persons cases. Several agencies or sources were brought to the attention of the researcher by personal reference from colleagues.

Methodology

Casework with a family and their agency contacts served as a background to finding new agencies and as a basis for evaluating data received from all agencies involved with missing persons. Tables were devised to

present data of various kinds: (1) number and kinds of respondents; (2) relation of purposes and kinds of assistance by each type of agency; (3) cases accepted for searching, related to agency definition of a missing person; (4) agencies conducting searches internationally; (5) media as reported used by all agencies; (6) data on how frequently families are advised of progress; (7) how long the agency will continue the search; (8) number of persons found compared to number of searches undertaken; (9) opinions of agencies on forming a National Clearing House of information or additional legislation in regard to facilitating searches.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Case Study - Kevin Russell Wellcome

Background and History

Fort Devens, Massachusetts, was the birthplace of Kevin Russell Wellcome on November 15, 1944. The father, a radar officer, and the mother, a nurse, warmly welcomed his arrival.

By the time Kevin was four years old he and his sister Lisa, two and a half, had lived with their parents in Florida, Texas, Colorado, and a year in the British West Indies. After an interval spent in Bozeman, Montana, while the father finished his college work, the family again accompanied him on a series of foreign aerial photographic projects in which he participated. Kevin and Lisa attended schools in California, Canada, and in Philadelphia before going overseas to Iran in 1955. These moves were welcomed adventures for the whole family but the goal was always to return home to a wide green valley in the mountains of Montana. Living for two years in the scenes of ancient and modern Persia gave the family many new perspectives and leaving good friends was difficult.

A request came asking the family to adopt an "Iranian brother" for Kevin and Lisa. Being 13 years old and between their ages, he adapted well into the family while living in a Philadelphia suburb for the two years following 1957. The return "home" to Montana was made and all three entered junior high school after having made good records in the suburban school in

Pennsylvania.

As a child and into puberty Kevin was a cheerful, considerate, sensitive, enthusiastic boy. He was intense in his interest in many things and excelled in managing a paper route in Philadelphia, playing violin, and was elected president of the student council in the 1500-student junior high school.

As an older adolescent he began to be withdrawn and his open acceptance of adults and peers alike diminished. Occasionally there was an emotional upheaval involving rebellion at authority in a family situation. For example, at the age of 15 after playing a violin solo at a Parent-Teachers Association meeting, he walked a distance of several miles home in the cold, not waiting for the family. This particular situation of returning home from family affairs was always a problem from that time on. During the first school year back in Montana he did very well with music and moderately well with school work. His high school experience there was disappointing to him with so much emphasis being put on academic achievement for entering college and the socially exclusive cliques that thrived. He was not left out but he was very sensitive to injustices to others and empathized deeply with those who were not "in."

The adopted son, Taraj, during this time was causing some dissention and Kevin was developing a real loyalty to him which eventually grew into an unreasoning blind tie. It also made him sure that Taraj's rebellion and defensiveness was because the parents did not love him enough. Taraj was an excellent psychologist and knew how to play one against the other. This he did adroitly causing the father not to cooperate with the mother in situa-

tions to his advantage.

At the beginning of the summer of 1961, Taraj left home to work, with Kevin's help, and it became increasingly difficult to talk to and reason with Kevin. Soon after, he left without the parents' permission or knowledge for California to visit Taraj. In a few days Kevin called to ask his father to come down to try to persuade Taraj to return with them for school; but Taraj did not, then or later. Kevin returned home alone with his father.

Kevin was very interested in obtaining a car, and this was an unresolved conflict until the following spring. That summer he helped his father with heavy jobs such as haying. He seemed much calmer and fairly happy upon returning to school. He had stopped playing the violin the year before because he believed that the mother was exploiting him in this activity.

Then abruptly in the fall of 1962, during the first part of November, he left with a younger boy for California to "make his mark" with his new electric guitar. He was allowed to stay because this was near his eighteenth birthday and he wanted to be "independent." He had a difficult time finding jobs and was treated "shabbily" and "selfishly" by Taraj. This finally ended in total disillusionment.

The following April the father had a scientific paper to give at Yosemite, so he and the mother drove to California. They were joyously reunited with Kevin who came home with them. He immediately went to ask for his old job at a grocery store and seemed happy to be back. Not long after, the father had an opportunity to go overseas temporarily, and Kevin and a friend begged to do the farming on "shares," so this decision was made.

The family and friends sensed he could not face communicating any

personal problems which they all knew he had, but everyone tried to help. He did not wish anyone to query him but he occasionally divulged his feelings about his personal involvements with others--which were often critical and fault-finding. During this time pains in his stomach made Kevin think he had ulcers and he made a secretive visit to the family doctor. It was almost a year later that the family learned this doctor had detected abnormal behavior and thinking patterns and urged him to see a psychiatrist. Kevin agreed to do this, asking the doctor not to let his parents know of it. There was no follow-up and, in reality, he did not go to the psychiatrist.

The father returned to the United States in the middle of that summer and visited home in Montana, then proceeded to Arizona to finish his job. By September the work and all else seemed well at the ranch, so the mother joined the father in the south for a brief holiday. There was knowledge of Kevin's desire to explore and prospect in the Southwest but an open invitation was not extended to have him come to visit in Arizona since it appeared Kevin would enter and finish his last year of high school.

The Disappearance

The parents had talked with Kevin by phone--and also to Lisa who was very concerned about his leaving on a long-planned camping trip to explore. He promised them that he would not go until after they had returned. In spite of this he left, telling Lisa that he planned to go to South America for six months.

The crisis arose for the family suddenly on a November day, 1963 (about five and a half years after returning to the United States from the Middle East)--receipt of an airmail letter from Kevin addressed to Bozeman.

The letter revealed:

Dear Mom and Dad,
I guess this is the end of the line for me,
I'm sorry.
The car will be by a bridge in the Otter
Crest Loop off coastal highway 101 in Oregon.
It's 11m. north of Newport and 2m. S. of Depoe
Bay. That makes a long trip but it has to be
this way. I'll put the key in the left front
hub cap rather than send it. That tire pump
is in the left door holding up the window.
The tire will probably be flat by the time you
get there so you will need it. I would like
to just fade from this earth and the memories
of all who know me without any fuss. I ruined
my life, don't let me ruin yours also.

Love,
Kevin

The mother had returned from Arizona and her first thoughts were disbelief, then panic--thinking he was saying that he was going to do away with himself. Her next thoughts were that if he was that upset, then mercifully he might have become amnesic and they might even find him in a mental hospital.

She drove into Bozeman to a young pastor and his family and from there immediately called the sheriff's office at Newport, Oregon, for information. They had found the car and were about to contact the family. They had not seen Kevin. The father was contacted and the decision was made to meet in Portland the next day. They drove to Newport where they found kindness, cooperation, and concern far beyond the call of duty in the county and state law officers. Here is what they pieced together of Kevin's activities before communicating with them.

On the eleventh of October he quit his job in Bozeman. The thirteenth of October (Sunday) he left Bozeman, after trying to persuade a friend to go with him, with the intention of exploring old mines and prospecting in the

Arizona-New Mexico-Texas area. The fourteenth of October he stopped to buy surplus camp gear near Salt Lake City, Utah. Articles in the car, mud, a sketch found, and thorns in the tire confirm execution of this plan. Something disillusioned Kevin (reason not established) and he then began a long trek of 6000 miles. This trip included a stop at Punta Gorda, Florida-- established definitely by a service station operator before the journey to Oregon began. Kevin and the car appeared on the West Coast on the seventh of November in Newport, Oregon. On the ninth of November he gassed up and asked some questions of a busy station operator. He looked as if he had been on the beach digging--barefooted and wet, though the day was cold. This was early morning. The weather in this area during this time of the year and during this particular week would be extremely depressing to one used to a drier climate--wild high winds and cold rain in torrents churned the pounding surf to a deafening roar.

The car was observed by a home owner who lives at a vantage point above the scenic turnout on Otter Crest Loop described in Kevin's letter. Kevin parked and meditated several hours; attention was drawn to him because toward noon he ran up and observed the road mileage marker, ran down the road a short way, and then returned to his Volkswagon. (It may be at this point he put the key in the hubcap, etc.) He was last observed by the same homeowner dogtrotting toward Depoe Bay some two miles away. To this man's knowledge, Kevin never returned to his vehicle. The letter had to be mailed between 12:30 and 1:00 P.M. to bear the postmark it had. This checks with the homeowner's observations. The postmistress identified the letter, since it was stamped on the wrong side of the envelope with two airmail stamps.

All camping gear and personal belongings, including identification WERE LEFT IN THE CAR INTACT. There was an unexplained GI can of wet sand on the passenger side and his large pistol was missing.

The Search

Authorities.--Every business establishment in Depoe Bay which was open on Saturday the ninth of November was quizzed by either the Officer of the Oregon State Police or Kevin's father. A picture of him was shown; no other identifications were made. The trail ended at this point. The police were pessimistic since an unidentified youth would have a hard time traveling without being picked up for checking draft status. An "all points bulletin" was put out in Oregon, Washington, and northern California--also in Arizona.

Few could visualize such a drastic step as suicide but they searched the wild gorge cutting into Otter Crest Loop, and once during that time the mother had a fleeting, but strong, feeling that Kevin was watching them. When she reported this, one of the officers said he'd had this feeling, too.

Some suggested he may have "shipped out and ships at Newport were checked on the eleventh and twelfth of November. This investigation should have been carried further but was not considered a good possibility at the time.

The parents made a trip to Salt Lake to visit the Missing Persons Bureau. They were advised that this was "a pattern" and that he would return in a year or two. They made many visits to the police. Fingerprints were attempted from Kevin's guitar, and the police promised to insert a Missing Person notice in the Police Bulletin of the Montana Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation at Deer Lodge. The FBI suggested that the boy had probably joined the military in some service under an assumed name.

Earlier when the family in the case study contacted the FBI local agent, they found that information on the case had already been received but it did not come within the jurisdiction of the organization at that time because Kevin was not only over 18 but also he had sent a letter of "intent" to the family. Later the U. S. District Attorney, acting on Kevin's lack of response to Selective Service correspondence, authorized the FBI to activate a search. A detailed amount of information was then obtained from the family (summer 1965) in personal interview but there has been little contact since and no information given to the family as to what has been done. The family has had to initiate those contacts. Fingerprints, always a concern, were obtained during this time from a locked electric guitar belonging to Kevin, with the cooperation of the county sheriff's office. A picture was obtained by the sheriff also to insert a missing persons notice in the Montana Bureau of Criminal Identification, but the family was never informed if this was done.

The FBI suggest going to the Social Security Administration and this the family did. After considering the "need" they informed the family that a personal letter written and addressed to Kevin's name would be forwarded to the Washington, D.C. office to be sent on to the last reporting employer under Kevin's social security account. This attempt at locating him was unsuccessful as information received from the Administration office in Helena informed the family that his last employer reporting was the grocery he was working for when he left home. A social welfare worker (a friend) attempted through a reciprocal agreement with the Social Security Administration to determine Kevin's whereabouts and had the same findings reported. The

researcher is informed that this agreement with social welfare agencies no longer exists.

Upon learning of their Missing Persons and Inquiry Bureau in 1967, the family in this case contacted the Western Territorial Headquarters of the Salvation Army and requested help. Subsequently, an inquiry form (see Appendix C) was submitted and reports of progress have been sent to the family frequently. A missing persons report with Kevin's picture was advertised in the War Cry and a copy was also sent to the family.

The Family.---The father left Newport in Kevin's car and explored areas in Arizona and New Mexico for several days with only a sketchy map Kevin had drawn. The mother drove back to Portland in despair.

Lisa stayed with friends until the father returned and the mother was relieved for several days to be alone. Many friends visited and were helpful in getting her to talk of the overwhelming situation.

Others.---The pathetic letter and story was taken to psychiatrists and opposing views found. One emphatically stated that this letter did not mean suicide and others were pessimistic.

The parents wrote many letters to friends whom they had known in their travels, where Kevin might be "found."

Help came from another quarter, too. Reverend Jay had done some work with the Suicide Prevention Center in Los Angeles and urged the family to write a case study that he would forward to them. This is Dr. Shneidman's reply:

This is in answer to your poignant letter of April 27.

We have, of course, no way of knowing . . .

even from the extensive information which you sent us . . . exactly what the fate of young Kevin Wellcome is. As we read the material a number of logical possibilities (some more hopeful than others) occur. One is the young Mr. Wellcome is a victim of amnesia and will, sometime in the future, be restored "to his right mind" and will return to his family. Another possibility is, although a distressing one, that he is a victim of foul play; the third possibility is that he committed suicide. This possibility is given some credence by his note of November 9. The fourth possibility is that he has in effect committed psychological suicide . . . that is, that he has chosen to disappear from his family and, as it were, start life over. We would be less than candid if we were openly optimistic in this case; on the other hand we have seen some miraculous turns of events. We certainly join with you and with the family in their earnest wishes and prayers that their young son who had so much to live for will be found alive and well. Please convey these thoughts to Mr. and Mrs. Wellcome for us

If there is anything more that we can do, do not hesitate to write to us.

Yours very sincerely,
Edwin S. Shneidman, Ph.D.
Co-Project Director

The parents also turned to a Chicago-trained graphologist and member of the International Graphoanalysis Society, living in Helena, who compared specimens of Kevin's earlier handwriting with his last letter.¹⁶ The report is as follows:

The letter in January indicated that he was beginning to skim the surface of things, not daring to do any real abstract thinking. Possible depression, but here was a boy who was super sensitive to criticisms and slights

¹⁶"Doctor of Letters," Newsweek, December 11, 1967, pp. 90-92.

that many times he imagined. He felt tremendous hurts that led to a show of vanity. He must have said to himself, "I don't think that anyone cares very much for me so I will have to build up a world for myself." Kevin was basically an impulsive person with heart involvement in all his decision-making. Thus he could never be completely objective about anything. His thought of suicide would not have been premeditated. . . . I believe this boy was beside himself and wanted to make a drastic change but I do not think that there was suicide in his mind. I think he wanted to get far, far away and to live a simple life and to try to find himself. He may or may not wish to come back.

I do not think that this boy felt he had been respected or that he had measured up to other persons important in the life of his parents. This is a pretty hard thing to live with and his note and his writing both indicate that he is sincere in this belief. He desperately needed assurance that he was loved and respected.

I am sure . . . the police will back me up in thinking that this boy did not commit suicide but just planned to disappear. Let us hope in his maturing years that he will realize that all parents make mistakes but they do the best they can at the moment . . . even though in the minds of their children . . . feel they were handed a "raw deal." May the future confirm what I have just written.

Louise M. Abel
Graphoanalyst

Assured that in handwriting specimens there was not a suicide syndrome, but traits are looked for that would perhaps cause one to entertain the idea. However, not any one set of traits would indicate a suicide-type person.

Family Adjustment

At first there were many tears. Grief feelings were often overwhelming and unexpected. The mother could not sleep, but prayer helped.

The visit to Newport had a nightmarish quality and she avoided Kevin's room and seeing his belongings. The decision was made to have the father sell Kevin's car before he returned to Bozeman from Arizona. But contrasted to the finality of death, there is hope and, also, the opportunity for activity.

Psychologically and emotionally they all withdrew, especially Lisa. Little social life was initiated, and many people who they knew they did not talk to about this nor did they communicate this crisis which they had faced in writing to many others. The mother felt a great deal of hostility toward the institution of the church because little comfort came from this quarter. The husband and most of the family would not discuss the situation with her, but it was always there.

Spiritually, there is always comfort for those who seek and the family feels that spiritual perceptions and understandings have increased. The mother says two other striking things have happened---feeling a gradual loss of concern over what people think or have thought about their crisis and other matters and feeling a loss of the fear of death, which is a great freedom.

Many of the family's friendships have been deepened and they have found personally that many more people have experienced this baffling problem than they could ever imagine. To paraphrase Cuber, "The family whose (son) has gone away often committed no overt offense - yet their world of hope collapsed upon them. This is a hurtful thing; that one thinks he knows the reasons is small comfort; the fact won't go away."¹⁷

¹⁷John F. Cuber and Peggy B. Harroff, The Significant Americans (New York: Appleton-Century, Affiliate of Meridith Press, 1965).

