

Perspectives on Missing Persons Cases

Perspectives on Missing Persons Cases

Edited by

Mary Graw Leary

Sharon W. Cooper

Daniel Broughton

Patty Wetterling



CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS

Durham, North Carolina

Copyright © 2015
Carolina Academic Press
All Rights Reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Leary, Mary Graw.

Perspectives on missing persons cases / Mary Graw Leary, Sharon Watkins
Cooper, Patty Wetterling, and Daniel D. Broughton.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-61163-516-4 (alk. paper)

1. Missing persons. 2. Abduction. 3. Criminal investigation. I. Title.

HV6762.A3L43 2015

363.2'336--dc23

2015009554

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS
700 Kent Street
Durham, North Carolina 27701
Telephone (919) 489-7486
Fax (919) 493-5668
www.cap-press.com

Printed in the United States of America.

Thanks to the victims, survivors, and their families who bravely share their stories so others need not walk in their shoes.

Thanks to MPL, FML, and CEL for their continuous support in this long project. To George and Mary Graw who worked tirelessly to protect and provide. To outstanding research assistants and librarians Steve Young, Christopher Flagg, Rebecca Ryan, Mary-Eileen Sullivan, and Tina Lee, who saw this project from infancy to completion.

Thanks to DRB, QCB, and NDW for their encouragement and love. Also to JK for your research support. This end result is just the beginning of allowing the voices of survivors and families to be heard.

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments	xi
Foreword <i>David Reichert</i>	xiii
Introduction <i>Daniel Broughton</i>	3
MISSING	
Chapter 1 · Experiential: Jacob’s Hope <i>Patty Wetterling</i>	13
Chapter 2 · A Child Is Missing: Providing Support for Families of Missing Children <i>Duane T. Bowers</i>	23
MISSING AND ABDUCTED	
Chapter 3 · Stranger Abduction <i>Gary Toelke</i>	65
Chapter 4 · The Devastating Problem of Infant Abduction and Guidelines for Prevention for Health Care Professionals <i>Sharon W. Cooper</i>	85
Chapter 5 · Family Abduction Cases <i>Mary Graw Leary and Lynn Rooney</i>	103
Chapter 6 · International Family Abduction <i>Julia Alanen and Preston Findlay</i>	125
Chapter 7 · The Irony of Missing-Child Services <i>Melissa “Liss” Haviv</i>	175
Chapter 8 · New Doorway into Family Abduction: Lessons from Take Root <i>Melissa “Liss” Haviv</i>	187

Chapter 9 · Experiential: Susan Morrow's Story <i>Susan Morrow</i>	221
Chapter 10 · Experiential: Family Parental Abduction <i>Abby Potash</i>	229
Chapter 11 · Experiential: My Great Real Life Story <i>Pennygale Gusman</i>	243

MISSING AND EXPLOITED

Chapter 12 · Missing Human Trafficking Cases <i>John Cotton Richmond</i>	253
Chapter 13 · The Medical Problems for Missing and Exploited Persons <i>Sharon W. Cooper</i>	287
Chapter 14 · Innocence Lost: America's Prostituted Youth and Law Enforcement's Response to the Growing Problem <i>Janice Mertz</i>	315
Chapter 15 · Reflections from an International Perspective: Some Notes for a New Focus on the Protection of Childhood <i>Juan Miguel Petit</i>	327
Chapter 16 · Experiential: Internet Lured and Abducted <i>Carol Ryan</i>	339
Chapter 17 · Experiential Case Study: Aftermath of Being Internet Lured and Abducted <i>Mary Kozakiewicz</i>	359

MISSING AND UNKNOWN

Chapter 18 · Children Missing from Foster Care <i>Kevin Michael Ryan</i>	371
Chapter 19 · Missing, Abducted, or Killed <i>Sharon W. Cooper</i>	381
Chapter 20 · The Missing Senior Citizen with Cognitive Impairment <i>Meredeth Rowe and Marie Boltz</i>	405
Chapter 21 · Discarded and Abandoned Newborns <i>Mary Graw Leary</i>	421
Chapter 22 · War Missing <i>Harendra de Silva</i>	453
Chapter 23 · Experiential: The Gap <i>David Francis</i>	469
Chapter 24 · Lessons Learned: Missing Children and Natural Disasters <i>Harendra de Silva</i>	483

MISSING, HEALING, AND PREVENTION

Chapter 25 · Reunification Model for Transitioning Families in Non-Familial Abductions <i>Rebecca Bailey, Joanna Lippert, and Jane Dickel</i>	505
Chapter 26 · Victim Preparation and Support <i>Babette Boyd</i>	519
Chapter 27 · Trauma Recovery and Healing Are a Lifelong Journey: Recovery and Healing for the “Missing” Victims of Prostitution <i>Vednita Carter and Sharon W. Cooper</i>	539
Chapter 28 · Prevention of Missing and Abducted Children <i>Cordelia Anderson</i>	553
Index	577

Preface and Acknowledgments

Several years ago, author Sharon Cooper, MD, FAAP, began to collect material to share with medical professionals regarding how to best approach a missing persons case. She realized that cases regarding missing persons come across the desks of a variety of professionals: doctors, social workers, law enforcement, lawyers, legislators, and prosecutors just to name a few. All such cases, whether they involve children, young adults, or the elderly, bring with them harms unique to cases involving missing persons and not present in any other type of case. Much to her surprise she discovered that no complete text existed for such a professional to consult. Notwithstanding the fact that these are highly complex cases with very distinctive facets, there was nowhere for a professional to turn to obtain a basic understanding of the issues. Hence, *Perspectives on Missing Persons Cases* was born.

This text was created *by* professionals, academics, and victims *for* professionals and academics of all disciplines. It offers a comprehensive resource to which they can turn to become familiar with the singular landscape of missing persons cases. Therapists are asked to treat left-behind siblings, attorneys are asked to represent left-behind parents, law enforcement encounter missing adult cases, and doctors treat survivors of abductions. Because of the lack of closure and uncertainty that can surround missing persons cases, these matters contain distinctive components not present among other forms of victimization. As such, they demand an awareness of the unique issues and needs of victims present only within these experiences. This text provides that insight.

Critical to this volume, therefore, are international leaders from various fields who have written here to share their insights. Early on it was apparent that an essential source for “best practices” included the victims themselves. These victims have often experienced the secondary trauma of being “served” by systems that are untrained or ill equipped to respond to them. As such, they have shared their experiences and insights in the hopes that future professionals will be able to more fully ably respond to these cases and prevent further harm.

The authors in this text have chosen to exclude data from the first and second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrownaway Children

[NISMART] for two reasons. The most salient is that the most recent research, NISMART-2, reflects data collected more than fifteen years ago (1997–1999). With the existence of AMBER Alert systems in all fifty states, it is felt that the anticipated NISMART-3 study, which is presently underway, will provide better statistics. The second reason that NISMART research is not part of this particular perspective is because of the marked difference in estimates of numbers of runaway youth when the original NISMART research was compared to the Research Triangle Institute surveys of youth funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The former surveyed households, juvenile facilities, youth service providers and law enforcement whereas the latter surveyed *youth* in households, in shelters and on the streets. The latter research yielded five times the number of youth noted to have some runaway experience as compared to NISMART. It is the authors' wish that this publication afford the readers a more experiential viewpoint.

It is with sadness that we experienced the loss of Supervisory Special Agent Janice D. Mertz to a tragic accident on May 30, 2015. She was a vibrant, enthusiastic and dedicated Program Manager in the Criminal Investigative Division Violent Crimes Against Children Unit of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. SSA Mertz provided extraordinary investigative skill throughout her career and especially while she was detailed to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's office of the FBI Innocence Lost Initiative. We honor her and express our gratitude for her hard work as a member of the Department of Justice, her dedication to children and her patriotism.

Contributors to this collection include leading researchers in elder missing, legislators, internationally recognized doctors, FBI agents, sheriffs, representatives from survivor organizations, survivors, and victims. Each shares their unique perspective to inform you, the reader, how to prevent missing person events and, when prevention fails, how to approach these cases to compassionately and effectively bring them to a conclusion.

Foreword

The Honorable David Reichert

I am the former Sheriff of King County. I helped lead the effort to capture the Green River Killer, who preyed on young women on the streets. Today, I serve as a Republican Congressman from Washington State, chairing the subcommittee in Congress that oversees child welfare programs that work with youth like those young women who were killed. So I have a lot of professional experience on the topic of missing and abducted persons.

But you may not know about my personal experience with these issues, which starts with my own experience of being abducted as a child.

It happened when I was about ten years old, the oldest of seven children, living in the city of Renton, Washington, in a blue-collar neighborhood known as the Renton Highlands. It was a tough place to grow up, and it seemed like I grew up fighting, protecting myself, my brothers and sisters, and my friends. I wasn't a big kid, but I don't remember being afraid of too much. That is, until I was kidnapped when I was ten years old, along with two of my neighborhood friends. The three of us had decided to go into the nearby woods to build a fort. We packed sack lunches—mine was a peanut butter sandwich, plus some crackers. We headed out, sack lunches in hand, talking and laughing and making lots of noise like ten-year-old boys will do.

My next memory is of being tied to a tree, my arms wrapped around the tree like I was hugging it, my hands tied together and my shirt off. My friends were in the same position. And three twenty-something men were laughing and whipping our bare backs with tree branches. I cannot recall how long we were there or how long they whipped us. Eventually they stopped whipping us and forced us to eat our lunches after they had smashed them into the dirt. My sandwich was smashed up against my face as they forced the dirt and the grit into my mouth and made me chew and swallow over and over.

Finally these hoods got bored and hungry themselves. They decided to untie me and then two of them escorted me to a nearby field that had an apple tree. My friends were left with one guard and still tied up. I was told to climb the tree and get them some apples. I climbed and was thinking the entire time of a way to escape. When their hands were full of apples, they told me to climb down. I knew this was my chance. I climbed to the lowest limb and grabbed one last apple. When I reached the limb I threw that apple

as hard as I could and hit one of our captors right in the forehead. I jumped from the tree and ran as fast as I could, with the two of them in pursuit. But I knew those woods like my backyard and I took them through thick underbrush and blackberry vines. They could not catch me! I made it home and my parents called the police. We found my friends, but of course the kidnappers were gone. Someone said they caught those guys, but I am not sure what happened to them.

Obviously, this experience made a huge impression on me. After the incident, I stayed close to home and my parents did not ever have to wonder where I was. My parents, my family, and I were lucky—I got away. Hundreds of parents across the country are not as lucky, wondering every day where their children are and when they might come home.

Even though I was able to escape my kidnappers, life at my house was no picnic. I grew up with domestic violence. I hid in the closet, under the house, outside and at the neighbor's house. When I was older I ran away. That's just how it was. I thought everyone grew up that way. Maybe that is why yelling, screaming, and hitting did not scare me much, since violence was a part of my everyday life.

By the time I reached high school, I was physically engaged in the arguments between my mom and dad, finally resulting in my decision to leave home. I ran upstairs, threw my clothes in a cardboard box, and left home in my \$150 1956 Mercury. I lived in my car and supported myself with a part-time job at the grocery store, making just enough to buy gas and food. But often, I would eat dinner and do laundry at a friend's house. At the end of the night, I slept on a dead end street in the Kent Valley. I remember an apple tree at the end of that road—that was my breakfast.

Looking back, it causes me to wonder why I continued to go to school. Perhaps I needed to feel like I belonged somewhere, and maybe school football and basketball played a part. Whatever the reason, I owe it to my teachers and coaches that I was one of the lucky ones who didn't end up on the street using drugs.

After about three months, I returned home, but avoided my father and still battled with the violence at my house, praying for an escape. Finally, the day came when I graduated and a college football coach offered to pay for my tuition, room and board, and get me an on-campus job. Again, I was blessed and fortunate to have had such a chance at a life so different than the one in which I was raised.

Through it all, I certainly was not afraid of standing up for what I thought was right, and I never hesitated to come to the rescue of anyone being bullied, harassed or mistreated. I grew up believing I was an underdog and had to fight for what was right. These significant events during my childhood created a clear idea of right and wrong and a strong sense of duty to try and correct the wrongs of the world.

My professional interest in protecting kids flowed straight out of these personal experiences. I knew somehow my life's work would be helping people, helping young people especially, saving lives from imminent danger and in the longer-term sense of counseling, guiding and coaching. There was no doubt in my mind.

I became a police officer in 1972, a Sheriff's deputy. I was in a world I understood, in a world I had personally experienced, a world where I knew I could make a difference. As a patrol cop, I responded to domestic violence calls known back then as "family fights." Family fights—that is indeed what they were, but they were so much more than that. They were life-changing and, sadly, life-taking events. I responded to one

call early in my career, arriving to find a man standing in his living room holding a knife to his wife's throat. I was able to distract the man and rescue the woman, but not before I became involved in a physical fight for my life and not before I had my own throat slit at least three times with the man's sharpened butcher knife. The judge found the defendant not guilty by reason of insanity. He was in treatment one year in a psychiatric hospital and was declared cured. A few months later he tried to kill his wife again.

This is how it worked back then. My partners and I would respond to a family fight, usually no one was arrested, and no one would testify because they were afraid to do so. It was not uncommon to return to the same fight two or three times in a shift. We were always hoping for some resolution, a place to stay for one of the parties, a violation that we could book an offender on to separate him from a victim. But those answers did not very often present themselves, so we drove away praying no one would get seriously hurt or even killed.

We especially wondered about the children. There were not many options for them, either. Some ran away when they could. Some families, the ones who could afford it, got counseling and really tried to make things work for the sake of the children. Once in a while that would result in a good outcome, but most of the time it did not. The kids who decided to run away could sometimes convince their friends' families to take them in for a while. Some ended up in foster homes, some in juvenile detention and many ended up on the streets as runaways. Some parents cared, some did not; some just gave up and got tired of trying—tired of trying to find help that did not exist. Usually there was no room at the YWCA, no foster homes available and the youth center or juvenile detention center was only for those who had committed crimes or were a danger to themselves or others. Counseling or drug and alcohol treatment facilities were usually overflowing. There was “no room at the inn,” and state social workers were overloaded with casework. Help was almost non-existent.

As a last resort, the parents who really cared would call the police and try to report their children missing. That was a futile effort in most cases, as the parents or reporting person were told that the child had to be missing at least 24 hours before they could be considered a runaway and a report could be taken.

Humanity has progressed in some ways, but in the world of missing persons, such as runaways, street kids, homeless kids and prostitutes, humanity has continued to ignore the most vulnerable of our society.

Eventually I left the world of the patrol car and became a detective. My interaction with families and children in crisis and in trouble continued. As a detective you become more intimately involved in the details of the family and their situation. You sometimes have the opportunity to influence the system enough to steer them into making the right decision in regard to the best treatment, sentencing or counseling options. This usually meant that the child had committed a crime. Sadly, at this stage intervention is sometimes a day late and a dollar short, but I learned to never say never. Lives have been saved even with the most minimal show of concern and compassion by a caring adult.

When I was assigned a prostitution murder in January 1982, the system and society were still in sync—neither really cared. The 24 hour rule for reporting runaways was still in effect and the services were slim to none. Humanity drove by these lost children

every day to and from work, play, school and shopping. They were invisible. In July 1982 another prostitute was found dead, floating in the Green River. On August 12th another body was found in the river and on August 15th I responded to two more bodies found in the river and I found a third on the river bank. This was the beginning of a 19-year investigation that finally ended with the arrest of Gary Ridgway and his guilty plea to 49 murders. Ridgway claims to have killed nearly 65 girls and young women from 1982 to 2001. Tragically, we think his estimate is probably a little low. Most of these young women were prostitutes, while a few were kids on the street in the wrong place at the wrong time.

So many questions, and so few answers back then.

In many ways, my personal and professional experiences show the importance of this book. The chapters range from missing persons to runaway kids to prostitution to support for the victims' families. But each chapter always points back to the importance of prevention. Preventing tragedy before it happens, instead of trying to pick up the pieces afterwards.

Now, as the chairman of the U.S. House Subcommittee tasked with protecting children, I see the idea of prevention at work throughout national child welfare policy, which has seen major changes since the 1990s when I was still chasing Gary Ridgway. When you talk about child welfare, most of our taxpayer dollars go to foster care, the system of finding and supporting backup parents who care for kids when their own parents cannot or do not.

Looking back on my own experience, I cannot help but wonder if I had been placed in foster care as a child, who would have cared for me? Would my brothers and sisters have stayed together? What would have happened to us?

If I had been placed in foster care back then, it certainly would have been a life-changing experience, and not necessarily for the better. Foster kids are separated from their parents—sometimes without any personal belongings—and moved to homes they may never have seen, to live with families they may never have met, in schools they may never have known existed.

For many years, child welfare systems were built around the idea we needed to “rescue” children from their abusive parents. But as more and more kids were put in foster care, the outcomes for kids became worse and worse. Kids in foster care experience sky-high rates of drug abuse, teen pregnancy, welfare dependence, school dropout, and incarceration. Studies show teens who leave foster care at age 18 have higher rates of post-traumatic stress than even veterans returning from war.

Then the policy pendulum started swinging in the other direction. Largely under the radar, Congress passed a series of laws between 1997 and 2011 that changed the focus of the child welfare system. Instead of removing more kids from abusive homes, prevention came to mean helping kids safely stay with their own family or relatives if possible. Help mom or dad with drug treatment if that is the underlying issue. Let states escape the straightjacket of federal red tape if they can find better ways of safely keeping kids at home. Engage neighbors, coaches and teachers in supporting the family. And if the situation is hopeless and mom and dad simply cannot care for the child, quickly find relatives to step up, or loving adoptive parents so the child can form a permanent bond.

These policies are transforming how we keep children safe across America. Since 2006, the number of children living in foster care has dropped 22 percent. The vast majority—94 percent—do not experience a repeat of abuse in the six months after returning to their families. That is all despite the deep 2007–09 recession, whose effects hammered many families across the country for years. Recessions stress families in many ways, and when families are stressed, more kids often wind up in foster care. So the fact that more kids are safe while foster care caseloads are dropping—and despite a bad economy—tells you something very new and unusual is occurring.

We still have a long way to go before every child is safe—before every potential missing person is safe. But increasingly local officials are making early and effective interventions to keep children and the vulnerable more safe. Prevention, in other words. My home state of Washington is one of a dozen states currently testing how to better use federal funds for prevention, which will hopefully pave the way for reforms in every state.

So in contrast to when I was on the beat and it seemed like no one cared, when help for kids and the vulnerable seemed non-existent, today there is hope. We are finding common ground and reforming programs so fewer people end up separated from their families, in foster care, and ultimately on the streets, or worse. We are by no means done. But as I think of my own life, and the various chapters in this book, I am reminded that no life, no situation is hopeless.

As you read this eye-opening book, I encourage you to think the same way. More importantly, I urge you to take action in your community to protect kids, care about the vulnerable, and reunite families. There is no more important or gratifying job you could ever do.

