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Your guide to Iowa's 79th General Assembly

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VOL. 119 NO. 25 SUN., FEB. 3, 2002 AN EDITION OF GAZETTE COMMUNICATIONS

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA \$1.75

# Fire strikes heart of Marion



Firefighters work to put out the flames that overtook the Park Place Hotel Antique Mall on Seventh Avenue in downtown Marion on Saturday morning. Sixty firefighters battled the fire in temperatures as low as 15 degrees. Thirty dealers had antiques on consignment inside the building, which opened as the Park Place Hotel in 1876.

Gazette photo by Kelly West

## Half of downtown antiques mall gutted; many of the items lost were not insured

By Frank Gluck  
and Kristophere Owens

The Gazette

MARION — There will be no replacing the priceless treasures destroyed by fire at the Park Place Hotel Antique Mall on Saturday.

As for rebuilding the business, at 1120 Seventh Ave., co-owner Barb Olmstead considered that almost a fanciful notion as she watched firefighters last night, then into their 15th hour, putting out still more spot blazes.

"I have no idea at this point what we're going to do," Olmstead said. "I just don't know."

It may be several days before it is known what caused the fire, which probably started about 5:30 a.m. in the basement, Assistant Marion Fire Chief Rick Boots said.

No one was injured in the fire, but the damage ran deep.

The Fire Department estimated the dollar damage at



Gazette map

\$375,000, though Olmstead thought that was an extremely conservative figure.

"You can't put a value on what was in there," she said.

About 30 dealers had items inside the consignment mall. And while the building itself was insured, many, if not most, of the antiques were not.

"It's just too cost-prohibitive to insure some of those things," she said. "They can't be replaced."

Among the items destroyed,

she said, were antique glass, dishes and furniture, original works of art by early 20th-century artists — including Maxfield Parrish — and countless historical documents and publications, some of them dealing with Marion's history.

Asked to estimate the value of what was lost, Olmstead — who owns the business with her husband, Dan — pointed to a surviving antique table.

"Something like that might be \$800, \$900," she said. "Multiply that by the number of things in there. There's no way you can know."

The fire, fought by 60 firefighters in temperatures that dropped as low as 15 degrees, also damaged the neighboring Sorg Pharmacy, 1138 Seventh Ave., which will have to relocate, at least temporarily, and the office of Dr. Gerald Eganhouse, a dentist, at 1144

■ Turn to 16A: **Fire**

# How did Guy die?

29 years after an 11-year-old C.R. boy vanished, his mother still hopes to find out what happened

**SPECIAL REPORT**

**Missing**

Gazette/KCRG TV9 Read It - See It

The Gazette and KCRG-TV9 are looking into unsolved cases of missing Iowans during February. Watch for reports in The Gazette on Sundays and KCRG-TV9 reports on Wednesdays at 6 p.m.

**Coming Wednesday on KCRG-TV9**

David Scott examines the case of Crystal Arensdorf of Dubuque.

By Steve Gravelle  
The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — It was unseasonably warm, a good winter weekend for camping, when Guy Heckle walked into eternity 29 years ago tonight.

To Nancy Heckle, her son is still the dark-haired, bespectacled 11-year-old in the family photo in the living room of the trim northeast Cedar Rapids ranch house where he grew up.

"I remember him the age he was," Heckle said one morning recently. "I think about him every day."

A fifth grader at Eisenhower Elementary School, Guy was "a bright boy," she said. "He was comical" and had "a marvelous sense of humor."

He joined Boy Scout Troop 101, which pitched its tents along the Cedar River between Palo and Toddville, near the Duane Arnold Energy Center, the weekend of Feb. 3-4, 1973. He was last seen by his fellow Scouts about 8 p.m. that Saturday.



Guy Heckle  
Disappeared in 1973

Troop members searched on their own for about 90 minutes before calling the Sheriff's Department. Regular and reserve deputies, Marion police and Civil

Defense volunteers searched the reserve near the Cedar River backwaters that night.

On Sunday, a searcher found Guy's blue quilted nylon parka, snagged on a log along the river's east bank. Nancy Heckle identified the coat, which remains the only trace of her son ever found.

By that Monday, 250 searchers were at work, including a bloodhound and a special search-and-rescue team from California.

Still nothing. Still.

Investigators found no sign

■ Turn to 14A: **Guy Heckle**

## Genuine missing persons cases are rare

By Steve Gravelle  
The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — They're a staple of detective fiction and suspense thrillers, but "real" missing persons — those who disappear without trace or warning — hardly ever happen.

"Most of those missing cases are very, very rare," said Iowa City Police Sgt. Mike Brotherton.

Under Iowa law, a missing person is someone "whose location has not been determined" and who meets one of four criteria:

- Is physically or mentally disabled.
- Is missing "under circumstances indicating the person's safety may be in danger."
- Is missing "under circumstances indicating

that the disappearance is not voluntary."

- Is under 18 and living with a parent or legal guardian.

When an adult goes missing, foul play is more likely, according to Wendy Nerem, supervisor of the state's Missing Persons Information Clearinghouse, which receives missing persons' reports from police and sheriff's departments across Iowa.

"That's why they tend to remain on the list and the number gets bigger, while juveniles tend to return or get located," said Nerem.

That's also why Nerem's list of active cases usually runs between 350 and 400, despite 7,489 filings in 2000, the most recent year for which

■ Turn to 14A: **Reports**



Gazette photo by Mark Christian

Nancy Heckle of Cedar Rapids sits on a couch in front of photos of her many grandchildren. Heckle's son Guy disappeared in February 1973, when he was 11, while on a Boy Scout camping trip. His parka was found near the river, indicating that he may have drowned. "But we don't have proof," Nancy Heckle says, "and it's very hard not knowing. I don't have any hopes that he is alive now, but we would like to know what happened." If someone knows that Guy met with foul play, she says, "It's not too late to give Guy's family some peace."



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**TOMORROW**

Under cover: The best way to speed the healing process of cuts and scrapes

**ACCENT/HEALTH**



## Reports: 0.03% of Americans are missing

■ From page 1A

records are available. Filings have been on the decline since peaking at 10,983 in 1998.

All missing persons reports from around the country are entered into the FBI's National Crime Information Center database. The FBI's statistics mirror the short-term nature of most missing persons cases.

In 2001, according to FBI spokesman Paul Bresson, more lost persons were located than went missing. The FBI recorded 840,279 new reports while removing 861,918 from the database. On Dec. 1, 97,683 cases were active in the United States.

Put another way, just 0.03 percent of Americans at any time are missing.

That may be why there's relatively little study of the phenomenon. Beyond juvenile runaways, a few broad explanations remain for missing persons — accident, criminal activity, amnesia, or deliberate disappearance — but Bresson knew of no significant research into which is most likely.

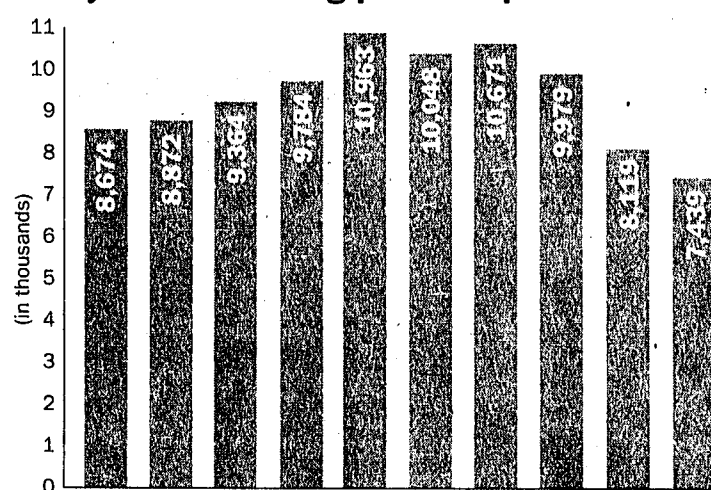
"Somebody out there should do that," said Bresson. "There's just a lot of different scenarios. This is the best (information) we have, but I wouldn't call it the end-all and be-all."

### 2 cases resolved

Two recent local cases, initially baffling mysteries, eventually resolved themselves:

• On Dec. 13, 1996, a resident found the bodies of Frances and Francis Smith in their car, stuck in a wooded area about 2 miles from their Marion home. The Smiths were found 11 days after they left their daughter's rural Mechanicsville home. Investigators theorized their car left the road and rolled into the woods after Francis, 75, suffered a heart attack. Frances, 74, died of exposure.

### Yearly overall missing person report totals



Source: Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation

Gazette graphic

• The draining of Lake Macbride for maintenance work in September 2000 uncovered the car of Cedar Rapids retiree Robert Fletcher, 68, two months after he had gone to the family's cabin on the lake. An autopsy confirmed Fletcher drowned after his car rolled into the lake.

### Active cases

Federal and state laws require police to file missing reports on juveniles when a parent or guardian requests — there's no 24- or 48-hour waiting period. The law allows police departments to have a waiting period on missing adults, but most local agencies will take a report whenever a friend or family member wants to make one.

Cedar Rapids police typically carry a list of about 20 active juvenile cases, according to Sgt. Cristy Hamblin.

Iowa City police list 11 active cases, according to Brotherton. Most of those, he said, are

people who have walked away from substance abuse treatment centers where they've been ordered to live by the courts.

"Somebody walks away from MECCA (Mid-Eastern Council on Chemical Abuse centers) ... I don't know how much time and effort is going to be taken to locate them," he said.

Similarly, walkaways from facilities such as the Abbe Center make up "probably the biggest majority" of Linn County cases, said Sheriff Don Zeller.

The extra effort goes into cases where foul play is suspected.

Many missing persons, especially juveniles, are reported as "attempt to locate" calls, Brotherton said.

"We'll give it out as a general broadcast to other agencies, but it doesn't go out to the national database," he said. "A lot of those are entered and canceled because they get located (quickly)."

## Guy Heckle: Faith sustained family through ordeal

■ From page 1A

of foul play, and Nancy Heckle, 70, realizes the discovery of Guy's jacket points to the simplest explanation: that he slipped into the icy Cedar River and drowned.

"But we don't have proof, and it's very hard not knowing," she said. "I don't have any hopes that he is alive now, but we would like to know what happened."

And there's still the outside chance.

"If it was foul play, at least one person knows, if they're still alive," she said. "If someone knows, it's not too late to give Guy's family some peace."

Until that happens, Guy's photo remains on the state Department of Public Safety's Missing Persons Clearinghouse Web site ([www.state.ia.us/government/dps/dci/mpic/list](http://www.state.ia.us/government/dps/dci/mpic/list)), accompanied by a note stating the boy would now be 40 years old.

"We keep them on the list," said Wendie Nerem, who supervises the Web site. "They may have been declared dead for insurance purposes, but we keep them on the list until they're located."

Nerem updates the site monthly. There are 361 names, 258 of them juveniles, on this month's list.

Runaway youths are by far the most common missing persons. According to Nerem, 88 percent of Iowa's missing persons in 2000 were juveniles, and 99 percent of missing juveniles are found to have run off on their own.

And they return home soon: In 2000, 75 percent of all cases were solved within a week, 88 percent within 30 days, and 96 percent within a year.

Nancy Heckle doubts running away, the most common explanation for missing persons cases, applies to her son.

"He didn't have problems at home, so for him to run away, I'm sure that's an impossibility," she said.

### On the Net

■ The Iowa Department of Public Safety's Missing Persons Clearinghouse Web site: [www.state.ia.us/government/dps/dci/mpic/list](http://www.state.ia.us/government/dps/dci/mpic/list)

ty," she said.

The Heckles never had a funeral or memorial service for Guy, his mother said.

"We never did," she said. "When do you say it's OK?"

When Howard Heckle died in January 1998, his obituary noted he was preceded in death by his son. But "I don't think my husband ever did give up hope," Nancy Heckle said. "He wouldn't say if he did."

Guy's disappearance was tough on his family, including two sisters, a year and two years older than he.

"I've heard people say that kids deal with things well, but looking back I'm not sure,"

said Nancy Heckle. "It disrupted our lives. It took attention away from the girls because, of course, we were concentrating on the search."

There were false leads, and Nancy Heckle received a phone call in February for two consecutive years.

"A young boy's voice saying 'I know where he is,'" Nancy Heckle said. "It more than likely was a crank."

"Our faith in Christ is what got us through," she said. "I was a Christian before this happened, but his father wasn't. He became one because of this. Sometimes when you're desperate, you call on the Lord."

Nancy Heckle has made her peace the best she can with her son's disappearance.

"I'm sure some of my friends are saying, 'Why put yourself through this?' But it's not like I'll ever forget about it."

■ Contact writer Steve Gravelle at (319) 398-5819 or [stevegr@iowa.com](mailto:stevegr@iowa.com)

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### Wedding stories run Sunday

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