

Mother's plea went unheeded

Feb. 20, 1986

When Marilyn Murray called that Wednesday, no one would believe her.

"Calm her down," my editor told me. "Take notes. Listen to her — that's what she needs."

So I did. She was frantic, and she talked hysterically about search parties and the lack of police concern.

Her 23-year-old daughter had been missing for over a week, she told me. She left the night of Super Bowl Sunday and she hadn't been seen or heard from since.

The night Charlene left, her mother didn't want her to go.

"She was walking to East Taunton," her mother told me, "to Middleboro Avenue. She had a purse with no identification. She only had \$5 on her. I told her to wait and take the bus with me in the morning, but she was bound and determined to get home to see her son.

"It was raining and cold, and all she had was a thin, jean jacket.

"She's the only kid I've got," Mrs. Murray sobbed hysterically. "My God, I want to know."

She had reported her daughter, Charlene (Lynn) Garza, missing the Wednesday after Super Bowl Sunday, Mrs. Murray told me.

"The police won't do anything," she sobbed, "She's an ex-junkie, but she's my daughter. I'm afraid something's happened to her.

"She's never gone without seeing (her son) this long," she said.

I told her I'd do whatever I could, and she seemed slightly relieved.

When I hung up I didn't know what to believe.

Mrs. Murray had talked to the editor, the publisher, and the advertising manager of the newspaper before she talked to me.

All their versions of the story differed slightly from the one I had heard.

"She left alone," Mrs. Murray answered when I asked if she had left with anyone. "No one has seen or heard from her since then, not friends or anyone else."

My editor told me we couldn't print anything about the case unless the police had listed her as a missing person.

"She's 23 years old," he explained. "She's not a child. If she wanted to take off from home, no one could stop her."



The Blank Page

Karen Cubie

I called the police and asked if anything was being done. They knew about the case.

"We have no leads, and no other information," the police chief told me. "We don't have a suspicion of anything.

"For all we know, she could be vacationing in Barbados."

Although she had been reported missing, he wasn't sure she had been listed as a missing person.

I called the department and asked to speak to the detective in

charge. He wasn't available on Wednesday or on Thursday morning.

I finally asked the officer who was manning the telephone. He told me he'd check.

She hadn't been listed, he said.

We couldn't print a thing.

I tried not to think about it.

"She's probably in Florida, or somewhere across town with a boyfriend," I thought.

Charlene Garza had been in trouble before, I was told.

But something kept nagging at me in the back of my mind.

"Maybe something has happened to her," I thought. "Maybe she'll turn up somewhere in the woods and it'll be too late."

When I got home from skiing the next Monday, my day off, I called my parents.

"Did the *Gazette* ever get a hold of you?" my father asked.

"No," I told him. "What did they want?"

"I guess some girl whose mother you talked to was found frozen in the woods yesterday," he said. "They wanted some help deciphering your notes."

I felt terrible.

Who's fault was it? I asked myself.

I guess no one was to blame.

She was 23 years old — old enough to leave home if she wanted to.

She had been in trouble before, and the police felt they had no reason to suspect any foul play.

We couldn't print anything because the police hadn't listed her as missing.

What bothered me most was no one had taken Mrs. Murray seriously.

Now we all believe her. But now it's too late.

