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## Relatives Of The Missing Hope For 'Someday'

By VALERIE KALFRIN The Tampa Tribune

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TAMPA - For Julie Williams, life, as she knew it, stopped on June 9, 2001.

That day her 31-year-old son, Bradley, a Tampa postal worker, missed work. His car was abandoned near what was then the Metropolis nightclub at Himes Avenue and Kennedy Boulevard. Money he saved remained in the bank. Clothes in his apartment were untouched, now boxed in Williams' basement in Michigan.

Williams, 56, talked to him almost daily. She can't stand the vacuum of his absence.

"It consumes my mind," she said in a phone interview. "I go to church every Saturday and say, 'Just show somebody where he is, so I can put him to rest and go on with my life.'"

Missing people are like unfinished thoughts, unanswered questions. This week, the family of former Tampa resident Jennifer Kesse, 24, stood on street corners in Orlando, advertising a \$250,000 reward for information about her disappearance there Jan. 24.

Hilary Sessions of Valrico has been waiting for news of her only child for 17 years. Tiffany Sessions, 20, was a University of Florida finance student when she vanished while jogging in Gainesville in 1989.

"The hardest part is not knowing," said Sessions, 61. She wears Tiffany's watch to feel close to her.

"It's so imperative for me to do something in her name, to keep up the search for her, so people realize that missing children don't come home in an hour.

"Sometimes it stretches into decades."

### Old Case Haunts Detective

The oldest missing person's case for Tampa police is the disappearance of Jennifer Marteliz, a 7-year-old who vanished in November 1982 while walking home from Shaw Elementary School.

At the time sex crimes Detective O.P. Parrish was a patrol officer who canvassed the neighborhood and later a homicide detective who flew to Kentucky, Mississippi and Miramar, tracking leads. Police have had possible suspects but still do not know what happened to Jennifer.

"This case in particular haunts me," Parrish said.

Then, officers did not have technology such as in-car computers or cooperation with state and federal agents, he said. "It was just what street officers knew about the area. This was the first child we had missing like this. We had to hand-search records. I think if this happened today, we would solve this one."

Jennifer's mother provided a DNA sample last year for the FBI Laboratory's Combined DNA Index System, called CODIS, so investigators could identify any remains as Jennifer's, Parrish said.

Unlike most missing children, missing adults might leave on their own. In Tampa, an adult must be gone 24 hours before police investigate the disappearance unless the person has a diminished mental capacity or there are signs of possible violence, police said. Many missing adults are investigated as homicides, with detectives interviewing friends and watching financial records.

Without the red flags, trying to interest investigators in a missing adult is difficult, said Sessions, who founded the nonprofit Child Protection Education of America after her daughter disappeared.

"In most cases, you don't have law enforcement working with you. An adult has the right to be anywhere they want to be, so it's much harder to get them to take a report of a missing adult," Sessions said.

Missing person cases are fraught with poor communication, said Melanie Englander, spokeswoman for The Doe Network, an international group of about 1,000 volunteers that works with law enforcement and medical examiners to match unidentified bodies with reports of missing people. The group has identified the remains of 38 missing people since 2001.

For instance, authorities do not exhume bodies buried in cemeteries for the indigent to obtain DNA to update the CODIS databank, Englander said. So one family's relative "might be buried and nobody knows," she said.

Law enforcement agencies enter missing people into the National Crime Information Center, an FBI databank of criminal justice information, so the cases can be tracked. As of December 2005, there were 109,531 active missing person records in the databank, FBI records show. Juveniles younger than 18 accounted for 53 percent of these records.

### Mom's Activism Hides Grief

Sessions said searching for Tiffany is "looking for the needle in the haystack." Over the years, she has crossed her fingers at leads such as a blood-stained sweatshirt that turned out to belong to someone else. She also has consulted more than 100 psychics.

"If I walked away from any one of those, it could've been the one that was legitimate, that had the information we needed," she said.

A court declared Tiffany legally dead in 1994 so Hilary Sessions could receive a \$50,000 life insurance policy to help fund her organization. The group now tracks 450 missing person cases nationwide and lobbies for child protective measures such as legislation passed in Florida this summer that makes luring a child a misdemeanor.

Sessions said her activism conceals her grief. She imagines where Tiffany's life might have taken her, perhaps to Connecticut with her college sweetheart who now coaches hockey.

"Most of the time, I have my soldier face on so I can go out and fight the fight," Sessions said. "People will listen to you more when you talk to them from an intelligent level than sitting here sobbing."

Even so, she knows discussing her daughter makes people uncomfortable. "Some of my friends I knew before Tiffy disappeared have drifted away," she said. "I'm like a pariah. They think what happened to me will happen to them."

### Answers Sought For Closure

Williams said her relationships with her other two children and her husband have changed since Bradley vanished. "Funny things aren't funny to me anymore. My husband says: 'You don't care about anything.' I don't," she said.

After Bradley disappeared, Williams wanted to travel to Tampa to search for him, but police, family and friends encouraged her to stay in Michigan. She regrets that. "I wish I could've done more, or would've done more. ... I feel that because I'm here, everybody forgets about me," she said.

She wonders whether his disappearance is tied to Steven Lorenzo, a Seminole Heights man convicted in November of drugging and raping several men and killing two of them. A friend showed Williams a letter in which Bradley wrote about using gamma hydroxybutyrate - a "date-rape drug" Lorenzo often used - and vowed never to do it again.

In her heart, she knows Bradley is dead, Williams said. "I gave up in the beginning. I just can't believe he took off and walked away. He was always buying me clothes and sending me flowers. The last thing he sent me was a basket of fruit, 'A Taste of Florida.' It even had a small palm tree."

So she prays. On Bradley's birthday and the anniversary of his disappearance, she has a Mass celebrated for him.

"When I see movies or stories about people who've been gone 17 years and they finally get an answer ..." Her thought trailed off, unfinished. "I hope to get an answer someday."

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