

**SEVEN YEARS AFTER ETAN**

For families of kids snatched from street the anguish remains very much at home

**Will unlucky 7 ever turn up?**



**ETAN PATZ**  
Vanished May 25, 1979.



**JEREMIAH HUGER**  
Vanished July 25, 1985



**KIRK QUINTONS**  
Vanished Sept. 18, 1983



**HOLLY ANN HUGHES**  
Vanished July 15, 1981



**EQUILLA HODRICK**  
Vanished Aug. 13, 1985



**TIAHESHE JACKSON**  
Vanished Aug. 13, 1983



**ANTONELLA MATTINA**  
Vanished July 16, 1984

By RUBEN ROSARIO  
Daily News Staff Writer

The room is empty. A picture of the Virgin Mary hangs on the wall above a small bed. A poster of Michael Jackson is tacked near the bedroom door.

Twenty dolls, some bought in Mexico and Spain on family vacations, are neatly arranged on bookshelves and dresser tops. Pictures show a girl enjoying a Christmas party and smiling on her Confirmation day.

Nothing inside this room has changed since July 16, 1984, the day 12-year-old Antonella Mattina disappeared after leaving her Queens home to go to a neighborhood bank in Flushing.

"We want it to remain the same way it was when she left," her father, Joseph Mattina, 43, said of the empty room inside his split-level home on 29th Ave.

His wife, Marie, refuses to leave for fear that her daughter will return and find the house empty. Marie kneels on a pillow inside the den and prays every day in front of a small table packed with religious statues, medals, and a tiny candle.

**Don't go out**

"We do not go out at all, not even to family functions," said Joseph, a painting contractor who has not taken a vacation since his daughter disappeared. Their son, Leo, 18, has scrapped plans to attend the senior prom.

"I tell him to go, but he doesn't want to," Joseph said. "He's always thinking about his sister. It's very hard on us. It's only us three now... We're not the same

**'We're not the same family like we were, but how could we be with her gone?'**

Joseph Mattina

family like we were, but how could we be with her gone?"

The plight of the Mattinas and other families like them was one reason May 25 was proclaimed National Missing Children's Day four years ago by President Reagan.

Today also marks the seventh anniversary of the disappearance of Etan Patz, an event that touched off one of the most publicized and heavily investigated child disappearance cases since the Lindbergh kidnaping.

Since Patz, there have been six other New York City children who police suspect were abducted by strangers: Mattina, Holly Ann Hughes and Tiahese Jackson from Staten Island, and Kirk Quintons, Jeremiah Huger, and Equilla Hodrick from the Bronx.

Gary Hewitt, a therapist with the New York Center for Missing Children in Rochester, N.Y., believes families of abducted children face unique problems. The privately-funded center is the only one in the country that exclusively counsels

families of children snatched by strangers.

"The families grieve on different levels and their emotions are similar but not the same as those faced by the families of soldiers who are missing in action," Hewitt said.

Stanley and Julie Patz, and their two other children—Ari, 9, and Shari, 16, have had to deal with a variety of unique problems.

Julie, 43, a volunteer at a school near the family's Prince St. loft in Soho, has not held a steady, full-time job since Etan vanished. Stanley has continued to work as a commercial photographer.

"I was a teacher of preschool children at the time," Julie recalled. "No one would hire me after that."

"I didn't blame them. I put myself in their position: 'Would I leave my 2-year-old son with a woman who lost her own child while the police are still questioning her? No, I would not.' I felt lousy about that."

**'How can you laugh?'**

Communication in the family collapsed as parents and children kept their emotions bottled up.

"The kids needed a relief so we went out and we played and laughed," Julie said. "People would come up and ask us how come we were laughing when my son, is gone."

Ari was "terrified when he turned 6 because that was the age when his brother disappeared," Julie said. "He spent that whole year seriously believing that 6 was the age when children disappear. He told me 'I'm safe now' the day of his seventh birthday."

The family endured another emotional blow last month when a veteran police detective who had grown close to them committed suicide.

"He was a sensitive, lov-

**'I know she's out there somewhere and I hope that someone is taking care of her.'**

Terona Hodrick

ing man," Julie said of Sgt. Bill Butler. "The kids cared a lot about him and they felt that he somehow held the key to finding their brother."

Stanley and Julie Patz agree that the turning point in the family's effort to regain a sense of normality occurred two years ago when Hewitt invited them and 12 other families from across the country to spend four days upstate.

**Much in common**

The families found that they "had all gone through the same problems... the guilt, lack of communication, children feeling unwanted because the parents were concerning themselves too much with the missing child," Julie said.

Terona Hodrick has never met the parents of other missing children or sought therapy. Unlike the Mattinas, she has tried to hide anything that reminds her of her missing daughter, Equilla. The

8-year-old vanished Aug. 13, 1985, as she ran after an ice cream truck near her Briggs Ave. home in Kingsbridge Heights.

**Haunted by dream**

Since the disappearance, Hodrick has been haunted by a dream in which Equilla runs into her arms and hugs her.

"I know she's out there somewhere and I hope that someone is taking care of her," Hodrick said. "She'll come back to me. I know it."

Keith Quintons, 14, Kirk's twin brother, has undergone a severe mood swing since his brother vanished Sept. 18, 1983, en route to a Top Tomato supermarket on Soundview Ave. He was transferred from his school last year because of declining grades and a series of fistfights.

**Keeps everything inside**

"The kids would tease him bad, telling him that his brother is dead," said the twins' mother, Lila Quintons, 43. "He keeps everything inside of him, he doesn't want to let out that he greatly misses his brother."

She's upset that her son's disappearance has received little attention from police and the press.

"I'm always glad when I see in the papers and on TV that a child has been found," she said. "I know what those parents went through. But very few people know about my son. I don't understand why one family draws so much attention and others like myself are pretty much left in the dark. These are children we are talking about."