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## Mystery finally unraveled

### Watson knew who took Melissa, but didn't know where she was

By SONJA GARZA  
The Daily News

HOUSTON — On April 13, 1988, Becky Watson dressed her 3-year-old daughter, left her with a baby sitter and went to work.

When Watson returned to the sitter's Galveston home that afternoon, Melissa Rose Androsuk was missing.

And although Watson had an

idea who her daughter's abductor was, she didn't "have any clue" where he had taken her.

Melissa's whereabouts would remain a mystery for 17 months.

"(Melissa) was on the porch and the baby sitter went to get a drink. When she came back, (Melissa) was gone," said Elizabeth Whittington, president of the American Association for Lost Children.

Watson's ex-husband and Melissa's father, Edward A. Androsuk, had abducted her. Watson was awarded custody of the child after the couple's divorce. She has since remarried.

During the search for her daughter, Watson said she filed a missing children's report with the Galveston Police Department and sought assistance from the Galveston County District At-

torney's Office and the Texas Department of Public Safety, but to no avail.

A year passed and the case was no closer to being solved than the day Melissa was abducted. The only clue Watson had to go on was a phone call she received in April.

"(Edward's live-in) girlfriend

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## Mystery

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called me and put Melissa on the phone," Watson said. During the phone conversation, Melissa told me "I miss you, Mommy. I think about you every day, but they won't let me come home." Watson said, adding that Melissa had told her teacher and friends that "Daddy took me," but they refused to believe her.

It wasn't until the Department of Public Safety suggested Watson contact the American Association for Lost Children that Watson's hope was restored.

During the past two years, the association has been credited with recovering 24 other children who, like Melissa, had been abducted by one of their parents.

The association, a Houston-based non-profit organization, took Watson's case in late Au-

gust. Through a three-week investigation, Whittington and association founder Mark Miller discovered Melissa was "somewhere in Michigan."

Miller and Whittington booked a flight to Detroit at the expense of Continental Airlines and a Houston Elks' Lodge. "We were leaving Friday and, coincidentally, we received a call from Melissa right before we left," Whittington said.

"Melissa couldn't say where she lived, but we got her to tell us what school she attended," Whittington said. "That's all we needed."

Watson, Miller and Whittington arrived in Detroit Friday. Monday night, they presented court records to the Detroit Police Department showing that Watson had legal custody of Me-

lissa.

Melissa, now 5 years old, was a kindergarten student at Webster Elementary School in Hazelpark, Mich.

"Our initial plan was to go get her out of school Tuesday, but we found out Tuesday morning that she wasn't in school, so we went to (Edward's) house," Whittington said.

"(Edward's) girlfriend let us inside, where we found Melissa sleeping," Whittington said. "When Melissa opened her eyes, she just kept saying, 'Mommy, you've come to get me.' She didn't even want to get dressed, she started heading out the door in her pajamas."

Tuesday afternoon, Melissa and her mother, finally reunited, headed for their Galveston home.



Staff photo by Bill Heister

### Joyous reunion

Becky Watson of Galveston embraces her daughter, 5-year-old Melissa Androsuk, Tuesday at Houston Intercontinental Airport. Watson and her daughter had arrived from Detroit where Melissa had lived since reportedly being abducted 18 months ago by her father.