

Successful Businessman Gives It All Up to Find Kidnapped Children

Mark Miller made lots of money as a mobile home salesman, a stockbroker and a store owner, but he gave up pursuing wealth to pursue a dream — finding kidnappers and returning stolen children.

The 31-year-old has spent his \$10,000 life savings to finance his activities. He lost his house in the suburbs. His credit cards have been canceled and his cars have been repossessed.

And to raise money for the organization he founded to rescue children, Miller has to sell candy on street corners. "It's taken all my personal finances to keep the organization going and more," said Miller. "I've lost just about everything."

But he doesn't miss material possessions. He has found 33 stolen children — and happiness — in the last three years.

In 1983, he made \$80,000 selling mobile homes. He became a stockbroker in 1984 and in 1985 invested in a convenience store.

He was successful . . . but something was missing in his life. "I was going through the motions, but my heart wasn't in it," said Miller.

While looking for a worthwhile cause to champion, he discovered that many organizations merely advertise for missing youngsters with fliers but don't actually look for the children.

So he decided to do it himself! And in 1987 he started the American Association for Lost Children.

Miller couldn't afford to hire private investigators, so he became one himself — and says he was soon finding children even the FBI had not found.

But he won't say exactly how he does it. "I don't want to reveal my methods," explained Miller. "Doing so would alert these abductors and make me less effective in returning kidnapped kids to their loving parents."

He works full-time on 12 cases at once with a backlog of 60. He says 359,000 children are kidnapped each year in the U.S. — many because of custody battles.

The children may be with a parent, but they're far from safe.

"In most cases these kids

He's Lost His House, Car & Credit Cards — But Found Joy Helping Others

are suffering and are being tortured by mental, physical . . . even sexual abuse," he said.

Recently, he rescued two girls, 4 and 2, who had been kidnapped by their father and kept from their mother for nearly two years.

They were in a filthy mobile home, wearing only underpants and eating bacon off a paper towel on the floor — and they had marks on

their backs, possibly from cigarette burns, said their mom.

In 1989 Miller brought joy and stability back into the lives of Tara Hall, 10, and sister Lana, 8, who had been victims of a six-year custody battle.

The two girls were abandoned by their divorced mother, taken in by their grandparents, kidnapped back by their mother and her boy-

ON THE JOB:

Mark Miller in his office (above). He has found 33 missing children, including Tara and Lana Hall (right).

friend, and then kidnapped again — this time by the grandmother.

Miller found the girls in

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San Antonio, Tex., and happily reunited them in Houston with their loving dad Buddy Hall, who was granted permanent custody by the court.

In another case, a 19-month-old baby caught in a bitter divorce dispute was stolen from her grandparents and father by her knife-wielding mother and the mother's gun-toting boyfriend. The father had been awarded temporary custody.

The grandparents hired a detective who said the kidnappers had fled to Mexico — leaving authorities helpless to act.

The girl was missing for a year and a half when Miller was called in — six weeks later he found the baby in Dallas, Tex., and she was returned to her grateful father and grandparents.

"We had spent everything we had on a detective and still didn't have the baby," said her grandmother. "But Mark did it for nothing."

"Mark's only priority is finding missing kids. He's given his whole life to this."

— STEVE PLAMANN

The Punchline Went Thataway



Who told the worst joke ever? Living legends Danny Thomas, Bob Hope and Milton Berle look like they're blaming each other, but they're really just cutting up during a break in taping

for the TV comedy special, "Bob Hope's Don't Shoot, It's Only Me." The show presents highlights from 50 years of Hope's career and airs on NBC September 15 at 10 p.m.

The man who is waiting for something to turn up might start on his shirt-sleeves.

— Garth Henrichs