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Mom's hunt for kidnapped girl ends with hug

By Ramsey Campbell

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

LEESBURG — A year-long, cross-country search by a Nevada woman ended Thursday night when she was reunited with her 4-year-old daughter.

Monica Flint hugged her daughter, Shen'tal, after Lake County deputies found the girl and Flint's former husband Terry Jay Flint.

Terry Flint is being held without bail in the Lake County jail. He is charged with violating a Nevada judge's order to return the child, a felony.

Deputies were waiting for him when he and Shen'tal pulled into the driveway of a relative's home, just off State Road 44, about 8 p.m.

It was not known how long he had been living in Leesburg. Relatives at the house did not want to comment Thursday night.

Terry Flint had been traced to that address by a Houston private investigator.

"Oh God, I don't want to look, I don't want to see him. Oh God," said Monica Flint hiding in the back seat of the investigator's car. The couple were divorced in 1988 after a year of marriage but had joint custody of Shen'tal.

Flint was arrested without incident and a deputy whisked Shen'tal from the front seat of the yellow sports car into her mother's arms.

"I'm so nervous, I'm afraid she won't remember her little brother when we get back," said Monica Flint, referring to her 22-month-old son, Cody. "Do you remember your little brother?"

Shen'tal, who appeared to be in good condition, nodded. The mother and daughter will return to Reno this morning.



MICHELE HILL/SENTINEL

Monica Flint and 4-year-old daughter Shen'tal plan to return to their Reno, Nev., home today. Shen'tal had been missing for a year.

Monica Flint said she had no luck in tracing her daughter or her former husband in spite of spending more than \$1,500 for private investigators. She began to doubt if she ever would see her daughter again.

But a few weeks ago she contacted Mark

Miller, founder of the American Association for Lost Children, a Houston-based group which specializes in tracking down missing children.

Miller, who was on hand when Terry Flint was arrested, said he tracked the man's path over the past year from Nevada to New York to Florida.

He said he traced Terry Flint and Shen'tal to the Leesburg home of Ronald Steadman, Flint's cousin.

After locating the house Thursday, he alerted deputy sheriffs who got a warrant for the arrest.

Deputies were at a convenience store near the Steadman home waiting for Terry Flint to return from work in Orlando. Relatives had told deputies the girl was staying with a baby-sitter but they didn't know where.

Deputies had about given up hope of catching Terry Flint who was expected home by 7:30 p.m. Investigators were were talking with family members in the front of the house when he suddenly drove up with the girl.

Miller, 31, said that until the moment their car pulled into the driveway he was worried Terry Flint had gotten wind of the stakeout and had moved again.

"I'm relieved, I'm happy for the mother and daughter," said Miller.

Miller said his non-profit organization is working on about 30 other missing juvenile cases around the country. He said most cases involve custody disputes.

American Association For Lost Children
539 Fred Rogers Dr.
Latrobe, PA 15651
(724) 537-6970
1-800-375-5683