

ADAM'S LEGACY

For the Walshes, a lifetime of grief



DREAMS DESTROYED: John Walsh tapes a segment for his TV show, *America's Most Wanted*. "Adam's murder," he said, "destroyed [our] dreams and changed the course of our lives forever. I never dreamed I'd be in television." AP photo/Michael Temchine

Six-year-old Adam's slaying turned his dad into a crusader for victims as well as a celebrity.

We became a movement.
— John Walsh, in his book, *Tears of Rage*

BY ROBERT NOLIN
STAFF WRITER

Sometimes it's the smallest of actions that kindle the greatest life changes. One Monday morning

Second of three parts nearly almost 20 years ago, John Walsh called from work to bug his wife, Revé, about

buying two brass lamps for their Hollywood home. They were on sale, and Revé Walsh squeezed a quick shopping trip into a crowded slate of errands.

And nothing was ever the same.

Six-year-old Adam Walsh was kidnapped from a Sears store and murdered. Within 24 hours, John Walsh

was on TV, pleading for his son's life.

He has been before the cameras ever since, pleading for the lives of other missing children, other crime victims.

Adam's cruel death delivered upon the Walshes a lifetime of grief.

It also brought them celebrity, a livelihood and the reward of helping hundreds of others like themselves who suffered through crime and an often unsympathetic criminal justice system.

"I find it very strange," Walsh, popular host of *America's Most Wanted*, said in a recent interview. "I never dreamed I'd be in television."

In July 1981, the hustling hotel marketing executive had a far different goal: development of a \$26 million casino hotel in the Bahamas. "That was the dream," said Walsh, 55. "Adam's murder destroyed all those dreams and changed the course of our lives forever."

Walsh's advocacy changed other lives as well, and won him the abiding affection of hundreds of crime victims.

"I've dealt with a lot of families that lost their loved one," said Kelly Hancock, a former Fort Lauderdale homicide

■ ADAM CONTINUES ON 14A

ADAM'S
LEGACY

"I've dealt with a lot of families that lost their loved one. John was one of the few that found a constructive channel for this loss. This was a way he could honor his son."

KELLY HANCOCK,
A FORMER HOMICIDE PROSECUTOR WHO WORKED CASES WITH WALSH

'I would trade all this in a heartbeat'

ADAM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

prosecutor who worked cases with Walsh. "John was one of the few that found a constructive channel for this loss. This was a way he could honor his son."

From the first hours of Adam's disappearance, the Walshes' existence was no longer their own.

John and Revé were fixed in the unblinking eye of public attention: police scrutiny, scores of friends and strangers assisting in the search, troops of reporters, tearful interviews.

The Walshes' first exposure in the national spotlight came on the day of their greatest devastation.

They appeared on *Good Morning America* to plead Adam's case, then got confirmation that a severed head found the previous day in a canal near Vero Beach was that of their son.

"I don't think people could even fathom the loss of a child," John Walsh said. "I will never get over the heartbreak of losing that little boy."

After a period of recovery at a friend's home in upstate New York, the Walshes returned to Florida.

Seeking an outlet for their anger, dissatisfied with law enforcement's lack of a system to catalog missing children, the couple turned to activism. Within a month of Adam's death, they opened the Adam Walsh Outreach Center for Missing Children in a donated storefront in Pembroke Pines.

The center was dedicated to help police hunt for missing children, as well as Adam's killer.

ACTIVISM PAYS OFF

Eight weeks after Adam's death, they testified before Congress in support of the Missing Children Act, which would require authorities to keep files on missing children and unidentified corpses.

The act was passed a year later. John and Revé Walsh were in the White House Rose Garden when President Ronald Reagan signed the bill into law.

In 1984, John Walsh's activism helped passage of the Missing Children's Assistance Act, which established the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Revé, 50, helps operate the center, which is based in Alexandria, Va. While she kept a low profile, John Walsh embarked on the high-profile, high-energy role of advocate for children and victims.

Over the years he has testified before Congress more than 35 times, appeared before all 50 state legislatures and made more than 1,000 speeches.

Presidents Reagan, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton have recognized the Walshes at White House ceremonies.

John Walsh has received numerous man of the year citations.

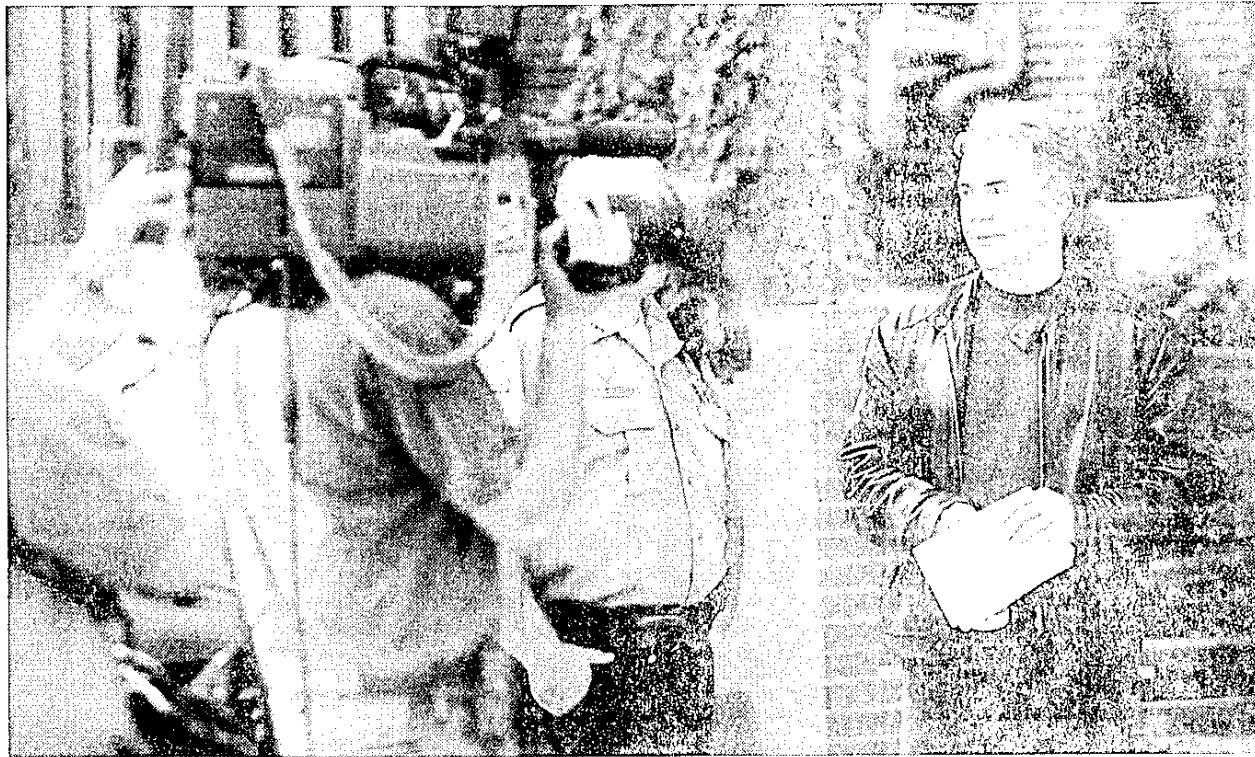
"I've been all over this country," he said. "I've probably signed and posed for a thousand or so photos."

The Walshes' fame grew in October 1983 with the release of *Adam*, a made-for-TV movie about the case. A sequel, *Adam: His Song Continues*, aired three years later.

Both films were followed by a roster of missing children and a toll-free phone number. Sixty-five children were recovered as a result of calls prompted by the movies, Walsh's office said.

Ever telegenic, Walsh honed his on-camera skills through appearances on nearly every talk or newsmagazine show across the dial, from *Oprah* to *Larry King Live* to *Gerardo to Nighline*. He hosted an award-winning HBO documentary in 1987, *How to Raise a Street-Smart Child*.

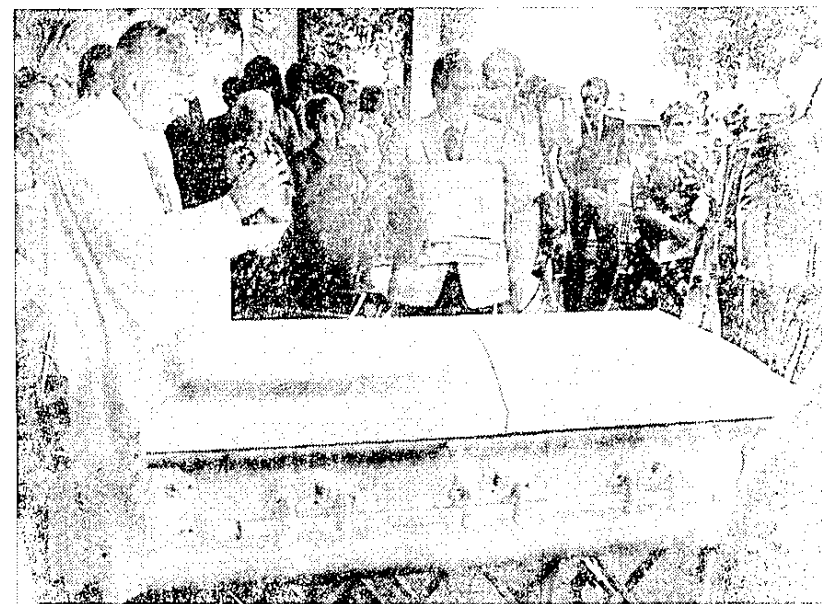
The flip side of fame hit the Walshes hard in July 1983, when



TV HOST: John Walsh arrives outside the Washington, D.C., apartment of missing intern Chandra Levy on July 11 to tape *America's Most Wanted*. AP photo/Michael Temchine



NATIONAL RECOGNITION: John and Revé Walsh meet with President Ronald Reagan at the White House Rose Garden on Oct. 12, 1982, when Reagan signed the Missing Children Act. File photo



GOODBYE, ADAM: Adam Walsh's funeral on Aug. 14, 1981, was conducted with an empty casket. The boy's severed head — but no other remains — was found in a canal near Vero Beach. Staff file photo/Lou Toman

they sued Sears over Adam's disappearance. During the suit, details emerged about an affair Revé had with a family friend before the boy's abduction. Rather than risk other embarrassing exposures, the Walshes dropped the suit five months later.

Impressed with his TV skills, the nascent Fox Network persuaded John Walsh to host a new departure in programming: *America's Most Wanted*, a show that would profile wanted criminals and offer a toll-free line for tipsters.

The show, fronted by a nervous Walsh, debuted on Feb. 7, 1988. Calls immediately streamed in;

within four days, a fugitive killer was caught as a result. Now in its 13th year, *AMW* has its highest ratings ever. The show was briefly canceled in November 1996, but Fox reinstated it after protest letters poured in from 185,000 viewers, 37 governors, 55 members of Congress and the attorneys general of all 50 states.

To date, the show lists 673 captured fugitives to its credit, as well as the recovery of 29 missing children.

"There's no job like it on TV," Walsh said. "During the week you see the worst, the autopsies, the grieving parents. But on Saturday night I kick ass. It's been a

ABOUT THIS SERIES

SUNDAY

Adam Walsh's abduction and murder changed the way America dealt with missing children's cases, touching institutions from law enforcement to business to Congress.

TODAY

For John Walsh, Adam's death brought celebrity, a livelihood and the reward of helping hundreds of other crime victims.

TUESDAY

Lost evidence. Sloppy police work. The death of the prime suspect. After 20 years, one of South Florida's most notorious crimes has never been solved.

tremendously gratifying job."

Along the way, the Walshes moved to Washington, D.C., and had three more children: Meghan, 19, Callahan, 16, and Hayden, 6. They maintain a summer cottage in upstate New York.

Today, John Walsh dresses in jeans and black leather jackets as well as suits. A typical 10- to 12-hour day involves speaking appearances, show tapings and news conferences. He runs two production companies and has dabbled in acting.

Walsh's latest cause is passage of a victim's rights amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would entitle victims to be notified of and speak at court hearings. It has been before Congress for three years, but lack of funds and lobbying have stalled action, Walsh said.

Police enmored of Walsh's show grant him access uncommon to the average citizen. During the investigation of Gianni Versace's murder in Miami Beach in 1997, Walsh could be seen inside police lines, conferring with investigators. A day after the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, he was at the morgue, observing pathologists piece together victims' bodies.

"I look at law enforcement as my partner, and they look at us the same way," he said.

Walsh even talks like a cop, always spinning conversations back to the "lowlifes" and "scumbags" he hunts on his show. "I hate these cowards," he said, "because they prey on women and children."

Walsh's status as quasi-cop has a downside. He has received hundreds of death threats over the years and keeps three bodyguards at his side in shifts. "The threats just come with the turf," he said. "All of it's worth it when you catch one of those guys."

One killer never caught was Ottis

Toole, the Jacksonville drifter who confessed to Adam's murder in 1983. Believing his confession was fabricated, police never charged Toole, who died in prison in 1996.

Walsh, however, is convinced that Toole kidnapped his son to keep as a "pet" and killed him when he made too much noise on a drive upstate. Walsh and co-author Susan Schindehette make a compelling case in Walsh's 1997 autobiography, *Tears of Rage*.

"Ottis Toole?" Walsh asked. "I hate him. He took the life of a beautiful, beautiful little boy."

Walsh's book also lambastes the Hollywood Police Department for botching the investigation into Adam's murder, losing evidence and failing to indict Toole. Walsh holds particular scorn for Richard Witt, Hollywood's police chief in the mid-1990s. Walsh says Witt didn't fight hard enough to keep the case files secret, calling him "insensitive and irresponsible."

Witt, now retired, concedes the investigation was "poorly handled." Although he thinks Walsh's criticisms are inaccurate, he bears him no ill will.

"My view of John Walsh is that he is a strong father who suffered, along with his wife, a great loss, and to this day he is obsessed with that tragedy," Witt said from his Ormond Beach home. "Sometimes he views others in a light that is distorted by his passion."

But to most in the criminal justice world, Walsh is a homegrown hero. Fans consistently mob him to thank him for the victims he has helped. He recognizes his viewer base for *AMW* as the "little old ladies" who call in the tips. The show plays quite well in prisons, too.

Well-heeled associates also lauder on the praise.

CYNICS AND CRITICS

"I think he's one of the great men of our century," said Michael Christiansen, a Fort Lauderdale lawyer and child advocate who has known Walsh for nearly two decades. "He is just a champion of missing children."

More cynical observers wonder whether Walsh hasn't carved a career out of tragedy.

To them, Walsh says: "I would trade all this in a heartbeat. Believe me, celebrity and all this is not what it's cracked up to be. I hope that no one ever has to walk in my shoes."

As far as his worth, Walsh said, "That's between me and the IRS."

The crusader also has experienced fault lines in his personal life.

In late 1999, Revé Walsh filed for divorce in Palm Beach County.

She claimed Walsh "dissipated marital assets" on what supermarket tabloids reported were extramarital flings.

Revé Walsh withdrew the suit within four months.

As the two-decade anniversary of Adam's death nears, his family plans a small get-together at a grave in upstate New York that holds an empty casket.

The child's head has been kept as evidence all these years, but Walsh said police have indicated it may soon be returned to the family.

"This is very, very important, so we'll be able to bury him and have a place to go to pray for him," Walsh said.

But the murdered child isn't just remembered on anniversaries.

"I pray and think about Adam every day," Walsh said. "I'll see a butterfly somewhere, and in my own maybe maudlin fantasy world sometimes, I think he manifests himself to me as a butterfly. I'm still here. I'm looking out for you."

Robert Nolin can be reached at rnolin@sun-sentinel.com or 954-572-2024.

CHRONOLOGY: JOHN WALSH

Dec. 26, 1945: Born in Auburn, N.Y.

1965: Moves to Hollywood, goes to work at Diplomat Hotel.

July 10, 1971: Marries Revé.

Nov. 14, 1974: Adam Walsh born.

July 27, 1981: Adam abducted from Sears in Hollywood Mall.

Aug. 10, 1981: Adam's severed head

found in canal near Vero Beach.

Aug. 15, 1981: Empty-casket funeral for Adam.

Aug. 19, 1981: Adam Walsh Outreach Center for Missing Children established.

Oct. 6, 1981: John and Revé Walsh testify before Congress on behalf of the Missing Children Act, passed one year later.

July 22, 1983: Walshes sue Sears over Adam's disappearance.

Oct. 10, 1983: Made-for-TV movie *Adam* broadcast.

Nov. 21, 1983: Walshes drop suit against Sears.

1984: John Walsh hosts PBS documentary, *A Parent's Greatest Fear*.

June 13, 1984: National Center for Missing and Exploited Children opens in Washington, D.C.

Feb. 7, 1988: *America's Most Wanted* debuts on Fox Network.

Walsh named Man of the Year by U.S. Marshall's Service.

1996: *America's Most Wanted*,

canceled by Fox, airs its 427th show, profiling the Walsh case. Viewer protests lead to reinstatement of show two months later.

1997: Walsh publishes his autobiography, *Tears of Rage*.

HOMECOMING
Fired eight years ago by Cincinnati, longtime Red Tony Perez returns there tonight as manager of the Marlins, **1D**

NATION

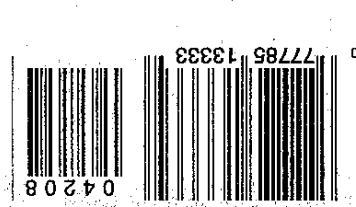
MAIL SCAMS
House members accuse a seniors group of trying to "extort" the elderly with hoax fliers, **3A**

WEEKEND

APES RETURN
Director Tim Burton brings his updated version of the 1968 classic 'Planet of the Apes' to the big screen today, **6G**

INDEX

ACTION LINE	39A
BROWARD	1B
COMICS	58C
GROSSWORD	60G
DEATHS	4B
EDITORIAL	10B
LOTTERY	2A
PEOPLE	4A
WEATHER	12B



Theory in Walsh murder grows fainter with years

BY DANIEL DE VISE
ddevise@herald.com



Twenty years ago today, serial killer Ottis Toole abducted 6-year-old Adam Walsh from the Hollywood Mall, choked the life out of him, cut off his head with a bayonet and discarded the remains in marshland along Florida's Turnpike.

That is the theory. But there is no hard evidence to support it.

LINKED: Ottis Toole confessed to Adam Walsh's 1981 killing, but later recanted.

After two decades of investigation, the most famous child-abduction case in South Florida history remains unsolved. The prospect that it will ever be solved has never looked so dim. The prime suspect is dead. The key evidence is lost. The 10,000-page police file raises more questions than it answers.

But father John Walsh thinks he knows the truth. "I believe Ottis Toole killed Adam,"

▶ PLEASE SEE WALSH, 2A

'Enough!' Developer quits convention hotel project

Peebles loses backing of Wyndham chain

BY CHARLES SAVAGE
csavage@herald.com



Peebles wants the county to pay his expenses.

R. Donahue Peebles' bid to build Broward's first major minority-owned hotel is dead.

Peebles' latest business partner, Wyndham International, has backed out of its deal with the controversial black developer, leaving no other major chain in a position to invest in and manage the hotel.

"This is not a negotiation ploy," Peebles said. "Enough of this nonsense. I do not intend to go back to that again."

The county must now scramble to find a new developer who can complete the hotel next to the Broward County Convention Center by November 2003, so it can house already-booked groups in its expanded convention center.

Meanwhile, Peebles said Thursday he will expect the county to pay his expenses, which he now estimates at \$3 million to \$4 million. In March, he put the figure at \$2 million. Litigation is likely.

Blame flew thick and fast Thursday,

▶ PLEASE SEE HOTEL, 15A

Miami a hot hub of hip-hop



MARICE COHN BAND/HERALD STAFF
NIGHT LIFE: Hip-hop fans dance at the club Level in Miami Beach.

Clubs and studios ride the star tide

BY EVELYN McDONNELL
AND AUDRA D.S. BURCH
emcdonnell@herald.com

South Florida, already the center for much of Latin and dance music, is now a destination of choice for the hip-hop glitterati. They are making the area their home, playground, and workshop — and creating a seismic social, cultural and economic shift.

In the process, they are boosting the local club, studio and video industries by connecting South Florida to a market that moved 105 million-plus albums last year.

Big-name rappers such as Wu-Tang Clan, Ja Rule and DMX are recording albums or videos here while others, such as P. Diddy (born Sean Combs and formerly known as Puff Daddy), Lil' Kim and Juvenile come to enjoy Miami Beach clubs. Still others have moved here, including Bone of the group Bone, Thugs N' Harmony and Guru of the groups

▶ PLEASE SEE HIP-HOP, 30A

'Two years ago, the club was full of stockbrokers. Now, it's rappers.'

NOAH LAZES,
president of Ark Group, which owns Level

KNIGHT RIDDER

Walsh case likely to remain unsolved

▶ WALSH, FROM 1A

tion, the recurring character is Toole, a dim-witted Jacksonville drifter who confessed to the murder, then recanted, then died.

Here is an account of the Adam Walsh case, based on fresh interviews with many of the principal characters, two decades of news reports and investigative documents:

Revé Walsh said she left her Hollywood home with Adam the morning of July 27 to run some errands. Mother and son arrived at Sears around noon.

She left Adam at a video game and walked to the lamp department. She said she was gone five to 10 minutes. When she returned, Adam was gone.

Revé searched the aisles for Adam. She had him paged. Someone called the police. Officers told Revé the boy had probably wandered off.

A teenage security guard would later report she had thrown Adam out of the store along with several other children who were bickering.

FOCUS ON FAMILY, FRIENDS

Police clear those closest to Adam, and case goes cold

The Walshes launched an unprecedented search. Police first focused on those closest to Adam.

John and Revé Walsh passed lie-detector tests. John had an alibi: He was at work. Police cleared them.

Jim Campbell, a landscaper and family friend who had lived with the Walshes for two years, seemed a more likely culprit.

Campbell had a motive: He had just ended a secret affair with Revé. He had moved out two weeks before the boy disappeared. Police thought Campbell might have killed Adam to get even.

Campbell, contacted through his sister last week, didn't respond to an interview request.

On Aug. 10, two fishermen found Adam's head in a canal near Vero Beach.

The same day, Campbell passed a lie-detector test.

Investigators cleared Campbell. Although he had no solid alibi for the hour of Adam's abduction, he was in town a couple of hours later and for several days after.

He probably wouldn't have had time to dispose of the boy's remains in Vero Beach.

"He had motive, but there was no other evidence," said George Terwilliger, a longtime Walsh family friend and sometime family attorney.

John Walsh and others would criticize the Hollywood police for hammering on Campbell while neglecting other leads. Other complaints: Detectives didn't invite the FBI to help out. They allowed Campbell, a suspect, to volunteer to answer phones at police headquarters.

Richard Witt, former chief of the Hollywood police, acknowledged the problems in an interview last week.

"Within the first few months of this case, it is really screwed up to the point where obtaining a conviction has been compromised," Witt said.

Witness reports from the mall produced one solid lead: Several people said a tall, muscular man had followed Adam out of the Sears store, pulled him into a blue van and sped off. Police searched hundreds of blue vans, to no avail.

The case went cold.

ANOTHER FALSE LEAD

Drifter points to ex-cellmate, who says story was fabricated

It sparked back to life in November 1981, when a Broward County drifter told Hollywood police his former

WHO KILLED ADAM WALSH?

South Florida's most famous child-abduction case spawned dozens of suspects - family friends, accused mass murderers, even serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer. The short list:

▶ **Ottis Toole:** The Jacksonville drifter confessed to the murder in 1983. Police said he knew details only the killer could know. But he later recanted. Many of his facts were wrong. No physical evidence linked him to the crime. Now dead, Toole remains a suspect.

▶ **Jim Campbell:** Adam Walsh's godfather had a motive: An affair with Adam's mother that ended just before the boy disappeared. But Campbell passed a lie-detector test. Detectives concluded he probably wouldn't have had time to carry out the crime. Police cleared him.

▶ **Michael Monahan:** The family friend slashed through a door with a machete in

an unrelated incident a few days after the Walsh abduction. He had other problems with the law. But he had an alibi and passed a polygraph test. Police cleared him.

▶ **Edward James:** A cellmate told police the Pompano Beach man confessed to the murder while behind bars in an unrelated child abduction. Neighbors reported suspicious behavior. But James had an alibi and passed a voice-stress analysis. Police cleared him.

▶ **John and Revé Walsh:** Some witnesses contradicted Revé's account of the day Adam disappeared. But both parents passed lie-detector tests, and John had an alibi. Police cleared them.

cellmate had confessed to the Adam Walsh murder.

John Terry said cellmate Edward James, arrested in an unrelated child abduction, bragged that he had abducted Adam and headed up the turnpike. The boy threatened to tell his parents and demanded money. James pulled over, cut off the boy's head with a knife and kicked it into a canal.

In an interview this week, James, now 70 and living in Avon Park, said he never met Terry. The story, he said, is pure bunk.

"They made a case out of something that wasn't even a case," James said. "And I'm still paying for it."

A neighbor told police James was missing from his home at the time Walsh disappeared and for weeks afterward. When James resurfaced, the neighbor said, he had reupholstered the front seat of his Plymouth Fury.

But a former employer said James was at work the day Walsh disappeared. Forensic tests in the car turned up nothing. Years later, James passed a voice-stress analysis test.

The case languished for two more years.

Then, on Oct. 21, 1983, news media around the country announced that police had found the murderer.

A CONFUSING CONFESSION

Suspect gives details of killing, but lack of evidence blows case

On Oct. 10, a mass-murder suspect in Jacksonville told a detective he had killed a boy he found at a mall near Fort Lauderdale.

Hollywood police rushed to Duval County Jail to interview Ottis Elwood Toole.

Police said Toole told them he had killed Adam Walsh with help from his sometime partner, Henry Lee Lucas. The men abducted Adam in a white Cadillac, drove about an hour to an isolated dirt road and decapitated the boy, Toole said.

Police challenged Toole: Lucas was in jail at the time of the abduction. Toole revised his story; he had worked alone.

Toole led police to the Hollywood Mall, where he correctly identified the spot Adam had been ejected from the store; to a dirt access road near mile marker 126 on the turnpike, where he said he had buried the body; and to a canal near mile marker 130, where he correctly pointed out the place Adam's head had been discovered.

The medical examiner's report matched key elements of Toole's account: Adam had been face down when decapitated. His head was sheared off with three to five knife strokes.

"I think, and I've always thought this, that the evidence linking Ottis Toole to the murder of Adam Walsh is extremely compelling," said Witt, the former Hollywood police chief.

Investigators lifted bloodstained carpet from Toole's car. But without the DNA testing available today, there was no telling if the blood was Adam's.

Toole later recanted and denied any role in the murder. He confessed again, then



HERALD FILE, 1981

HOPELESS: Revé and John Walsh meet the press shortly after learning a severed head had been identified as Adam's.

recanted again.

There was ample reason to doubt Toole had anything to do with Adam Walsh's murder.

Speculation suggested a Jacksonville detective had tainted Toole's confession to sweeten a potential book deal. But Hollywood investigators found no proof.

In his purported confession, Toole couldn't correctly describe Adam's hair or clothes. And police couldn't find Adam's body where Toole said he left it.

"He's as pure as the driven snow," said Ron Hickman, one of the original detectives on the Walsh case, interviewed this week. "I spent 100 hours with that individual. I'll tell you right now: He didn't do it."

James Redwine, a Jacksonville man, contends Toole wasn't anywhere near Broward County on the day Adam disappeared. According to Redwine, Toole spent July 27, 1981, at his family's rooming house, where Toole lived.

"He was up here that day," Redwine said in an interview last week. "Ain't no way he could have drove there or back ... That's the truth. I ain't got a reason to lie."

Hollywood police say the Redwines cannot prove Toole was there.

New witnesses surfaced after Toole's picture appeared in the news media, claiming they had seen him and his white Cadillac at or near the scene of the crime. Police discarded their earlier "blue van" theory.

Heidi Mayer, a Hollywood girl, said the picture looked like the gap-toothed man who had approached her at a Kmart around the time of Adam's abduction, pushing a shopping cart and offering, "Let me take you for a ride in this basket."

"I do remember the space in his mouth, between his teeth," mother Arlene Mayer said in an interview last week. "He was standing there, just watching us."

At least two witnesses claimed they had seen Adam Walsh in a white Cadillac.

One, a Hollywood man named William Mistler, said he had seen Toole at the mall with Adam. Under hypnosis, Mistler recalled details about the car, including a dent on the bumper that hadn't been reported in the news media.

But without physical evidence, Broward County prosecutors felt they had no case.

In May 1995, a series of arti-

cles in an Alabama newspaper posited a new theory: A family friend named Michael Monahan could have murdered Adam as a favor for buddy Jim Campbell, the spurned lover of Revé Walsh.

There was no evidence tying Monahan to the crime, just an odd coincidence: Three days after the Adam Walsh abduction, Monahan had slashed through a door with a machete in Oakland Park in a dispute over a skateboard.

Monahan, speaking publicly about the incident for the first time, said the allegations are nonsense.

"If you really do your homework, if you're serious about finding out the truth, you'll realize I have nothing to do with this case," Monahan said.

Police, prompted by the news reports, tested the machete from the skateboard incident. Results were inconclusive.

They questioned Monahan, who was on probation after a federal conviction for the extortion of a stockbroker who was later found murdered.

Monahan passed a lie-detector test. His girlfriend, Chris Fehhhaber, provided an alibi: Monahan was with her at the time of the abduction.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Evidence vanishes, suspect dies - but was there final revelation?

Sgt. Mark Smith, a Hollywood police detective assigned to the case in 1994, remained focused on Ottis Toole. He wanted to order DNA testing on the blood-stained carpeting from Toole's car.

But the evidence had vanished, signed out of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement lab years earlier by someone with the initial J.G.

Smith found the detective, who said he didn't remember signing out the evidence.

Toole's car, too, was gone. The evidence debacle became public with the release of the Adam Walsh case file in 1996.

"They had made incredible mistakes," Walsh said this week. "It was beyond incompetence. It was almost malfeasance, because they were covering their asses. How do you lose an entire car?"

Smith and John Walsh held out one last hope: A deathbed confession from Toole, serving five life sentences at Union Correctional Institution in Raiford.

Smith asked to be alerted if Toole, suffering from cirrhosis and possibly AIDS, was near death.

But prison officials lost track of the request. Toole died on Sept. 15, 1996, before Smith could talk to him one last time.

A short while later, a niece of Ottis Toole contacted America's Most Wanted, the television program hosted by Walsh. She said Ottis had made a deathbed confession - to her.

"Uncle Ottis, are you the one that killed Adam Walsh?" she asked him, according to John Walsh.

"Yeah," he replied. "I killed the little boy. And I always felt kinda bad about it, too."

MORAYS
Jewelers
Celebrating 100 Years in America

<p>Authorized Agent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audemars Piguet Blancpain Breguet Chopard Corum Frank Muller Girard Perregaux IWC Jaeger Le Coultre Omega Paneral Plaget Vacheron Constantine 	<p>Uptown</p> <p>In</p> <p>Downtown</p>	<p>Authorized Agent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baume & Mercier Bedat Bvlgari Cartier Charrlot David Yurman Ebel Gucci Hublot Mikimoto Mont Blanc Raymond Weil Tag Heuer
--	---	---

Diamonds - Fine Jewelry - Watches

305-374-0739 50 NE 2nd Avenue Downtown Miami

Alfred I DuPont Building Valet Parking Available on NE First St

COLE HAAN

Handcrafted Italian city boot in finest calfskin. Ava \$285

NOW OPEN

BAL HARBOUR SHOPS

305 866 7890

WWW.COLEHAAN.COM

WANTED CASH PAID

WE BUY, SELL, LOAN ...

We Can Accommodate Your Needs

PAYING TOP DOLLAR FOR:

Single Items To Multi-Million Dollar Estates.

- Jewelry
- Watches
- Diamonds
- Gold
- Furniture
- Sterling Silver
- 19th Century Paintings
- Anything Signed Tiffany
- Anything Signed Cartier
- L'afique
- Collectibles

DIAMONDS

ROLEX

STERLING SILVER

CALL TODAY FOR A QUOTE!!!

BUCHWALD'S
JEWELERS SINCE 1932

36 N.E. 1st Street - Miami, FL 33132
125 SEYBOLD ARCADE

(305) 373-5283

Monday-Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Weekends by Appointment

Free Valet Parking
South Florida's Largest And Most Reputable Jeweler Since 1932
We make house and bank calls!

CONFIDENTIALITY & INTEGRITY FOR OVER 69 YEARS!

SELECTED THURSDAY, July 26	SELECTED WEDNESDAY, July 25	SELECTED WEDNESDAY, July 25																											
<p>FLORIDA LOTTERY</p> <p>CASH 3 5-9-2</p> <p>PLAY 4 3-9-2-5</p> <p>FANTASY 5 10-11-13-21-34</p>	<p>LOTTO</p> <p>13-18-28-29-30-31</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>CORRECT</th> <th>PAYOFF</th> <th>WINNERS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>6 of 6</td> <td>\$28 million</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 of 6</td> <td>\$4,656.50</td> <td>122</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 of 6</td> <td>\$66</td> <td>6,988</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 of 6</td> <td>\$4.50</td> <td>134,033</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	CORRECT	PAYOFF	WINNERS	6 of 6	\$28 million	1	5 of 6	\$4,656.50	122	4 of 6	\$66	6,988	3 of 6	\$4.50	134,033	<p>FANTASY 5</p> <p>16-21-24-28-35</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>CORRECT</th> <th>PAYOFF</th> <th>WINNERS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>5 of 5</td> <td>\$250,722.42</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 of 5</td> <td>\$154.50</td> <td>261</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 of 5</td> <td>\$13.50</td> <td>8,160</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	CORRECT	PAYOFF	WINNERS	5 of 5	\$250,722.42	1	4 of 5	\$154.50	261	3 of 5	\$13.50	8,160
CORRECT	PAYOFF	WINNERS																											
6 of 6	\$28 million	1																											
5 of 6	\$4,656.50	122																											
4 of 6	\$66	6,988																											
3 of 6	\$4.50	134,033																											
CORRECT	PAYOFF	WINNERS																											
5 of 5	\$250,722.42	1																											
4 of 5	\$154.50	261																											
3 of 5	\$13.50	8,160																											

20 YEARS LATER

Walsh murder changed the nation

BY DANIEL de VISE

ddevise@herald.com

It was the case that etched the haunting faces of missing tots on television screens, direct-mail flyers and milk cartons.

The abduction and murder of a 6-year-old, gap-toothed, saucer-eyed cherub named Adam Walsh 20 years ago this week shaped a national movement and sparked a nation-



ADAM WALSH

wide furor. It rewrote laws and redefined relationships between children and adults. It fed paranoia and launched a new genre of interactive crime-fighting that put criminals behind bars and returned abducted children to their homes.

Many tragic child murders fade from consciousness over the decades, but Adam Walsh's endures.

"It's been kind of a guiding light to those of us who followed," said Patty Wetterling of Minnesota, the mother of an abducted child who has never been found.

The difference may be John Walsh,

▶ PLEASE SEE ADAM, 16A

Adam Walsh case leaves U.S. transformed

ADAM, FROM 1A
 a onetime Hollywood cabana boy turned all-American dad and reality-television icon. He led off the national movement that formed around his son's death, and it fed off him.



JOHN WALSH: Anti-crime crusader

When his son disappeared from the Hollywood Mall July 27, 1981, the fiercely willful father organized the largest search South Florida had ever seen. Two weeks later, a fisherman 120 miles away found the boy's severed head. The rest of his body was never found. Neither has his murderer.

The Adam Walsh legacy cuts across the fabric of society. His death brought new rules to the art of parenting. Mothers learned to keep their children as close to them as their purses. "Stranger danger" fears reached epic proportions.

Such fears sparked a backlash that nearly destroyed the movement. At the high-water

mark in the mid-1980s, children lined up at shopping malls and schools to give their fingerprints for easy identification after death. Dentists affixed tiny ID discs to children's teeth.

Some experts say John Walsh filled a generation with fear.

"In some ways, he's taken his personal tragedy and

inflicted it on the nation," said Richard Moran, a professor of sociology and criminology at Mount Holyoke College. "What he's done is, he's made all kids afraid."

Walsh's publicists said his schedule precluded an interview for this report.

Despite the criticisms, it is undeniable that the older Walsh catapulted the missing-children movement into the national spotlight. The Walsh case prompted a series of laws that granted vast new powers to police and parents. It inspired the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a toll-free hot line (800-THE-LOST) to report child abductions and sightings and an FBI database of missing children.

"Essentially, John Walsh led the charge to get laws changed in our country," said Don Ryce, father of Jimmy Ryce, the boy whose 1995 abduction and murder in Miami-Dade

County became part of the movement. "Unfortunately, these acts are all named after dead kids."

Adam Walsh's death also launched the career of America's most powerful populist crime-fighter. John Walsh's landmark reality-television program, *America's Most Wanted*, has led to the capture of 677 violent criminals. Walsh transformed a potentially banal TV movie, *Adam*, into a ground-breaking interactive call for help that led to the recovery of 65 missing youngsters.

"I think John is the greatest child advocate this country has ever seen," said Denny Abbott of Boynton Beach, a longtime family friend.

It is the tragic irony of his life that John Walsh, catcher of crooks, can only guess who killed his son. Police suspicion has centered on Otis Toole, a convicted murderer who gave a garbled confession to the

LANDMARKS IN THE MISSING-CHILDREN MOVEMENT

- ▶ **Missing Children Act of 1982:** Spurred by the Adam Walsh slaying, the federal law called for the FBI to create a special database for missing children.
- ▶ **Missing Children's Assistance Act of 1984:** Also sparked by the Walsh slaying, the law founded the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which maintains a toll-free hot line (800-THE-LOST) to report missing children or the sighting of one.
- ▶ **Megan's Law:** A 1996 federal law that requires officials to warn communities when a freed sex offender moves into the neighborhood. It's named for 7-year-old Megan Kanka, who was raped and strangled by a neighborhood sex offender.
- ▶ **Jimmy Ryce Act:** A pair of statewide measures named for the 9-year-old Miami-Dade County boy who was raped and murdered by a stranger. The Jimmy Ryce Act of 1996 allowed law enforcement to make public the names, addresses and pictures of sexual offenders. A second act in 1998 allowed the state to keep the most violent sexual predators in custody after their sentences end.
- ▶ **Amber Alert:** A grass-roots program named after a 9-year-old girl abducted in Arlington, Texas, in 1996, it creates a radio-alert system that interrupts programming in the first few hours after an abduction to broadcast the news. It inspired the Florida Department of Law Enforcement last August to enact the Florida Emergency Missing Children Alert. Alerts go out on the Emergency Broadcast System.

Walsh murder in 1983 and then recanted. But Toole is now dead, critical physical evidence has been lost, and detectives consider the case unsolved, perhaps insolvable.

John Walsh's wife, Revé Walsh, told police she left her only child alone at a Star Wars video kiosk for just a few minutes while she looked at some lamps at a Sears store at the Hollywood Mall, just west of Interstate 95 on Hollywood Boulevard. When she returned, the boy was gone.

The task of finding him fell to Hollywood police. But from the first hours of the search, Adam's father left little doubt who was really in charge.

Within hours of his son's abduction, John Walsh had new purpose — finding the boy.

LEAPING INTO ACTION

He set up a command post inside the family home. From the mall's parking lot, he would bark out directions to volunteers while standing on the hood of a car. Police gave him the run of the station.

Under Walsh's direction, volunteers combed through golf courses and fields and gravel pits. Neighbors walked, bicycled and drove up and down every street in Hollywood. Truckers shared tips on their CB radios. Commuters awaited updates on car radios.

As the freshness of the abduction wore off, Walsh kept the momentum going with a brilliant multimedia assault. He printed 250,000 flyers. He posted a \$5,000 reward, then bumped it up to \$25,000 and to \$100,000 to keep the newspapers and TV affiliates interested.

Then he took the search national, persuading *Good Morning America* to do a segment on Adam and other notable missing-children cases. National television had mostly neglected such stories up to then.

GRIM NEWS

The morning of the broadcast, Walsh learned that the head of a small boy had been found in a Vero Beach canal. He went on national television anyway.

Along the path of grief, something transformed John Walsh into a Miltonian moral gladiator with a superhero's sense of good and evil. He traces the change to a conversation with the beleaguered Broward medical examiner, Dr. Ronald Wright, who told him of the horrors he had seen, the glimpses of hell, and the sense of purpose that had kept him sane.

"It's just that simple, John," Wright told Walsh. "There is evil. And there is good."

The battle lines drawn, Walsh engaged the forces that he believed had hindered his search for Adam: Hollywood police, who had failed to spread word of the missing child much farther than Pembroke Pines; the FBI, which had declined to join the case; and Congress, which had neglected the nascent missing-children movement.

At the time, there was no national clearinghouse for missing children and little coordination among local police departments.

"It was much easier to locate a stolen car than it was to locate a missing child," said Nancy McBride of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

So Walsh became a relentless Beltway lobbyist, testifying eloquently for missing-children legislation and publicly chastising lawmakers who missed one of his speeches.

In October 1982, 15 months after Adam's death, Congress passed the Missing Children Act. It set up an FBI database of missing children and empowered parents to report a case if local police refused.

In February 1983, Walsh persuaded the FBI to adopt a new missing-children policy and take a proactive role in investigations.

The movie of the week *Adam* debuted in October 1983 as one of the nation's first interactive television broadcasts. At the end, the names and pictures of 55 missing children flashed across TV screens along with a toll-free number. John and Revé Walsh helped work the phones.

In June 1984, the Walshes helped open the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The mid-'80s brought the height of the missing-children movement Walsh had created. Nowhere did it burn hotter than South Florida.

In 1984, Miami-Dade County public schools announced plans to photograph and fingerprint 200,000 students. In 1985, Eckerd Drugs put missing-children pictures on shopping bags. McArthur Dairy, which distributed milk from Fort Pierce to Key West, put the pictures on cartons.

Those milk cartons, perhaps the most memorable image in the missing-children movement, became a vortex of controversy that nearly tore the crusade apart. Psychiatrists and pediatricians, including the famed Dr. Benjamin Spock, said the milk-carton mug shots frightened children.

Children's advocates moved on to more effective methods, such as posting pictures on direct-mail flyers and sending out hundreds of pictures via fax in the first critical hours after a child disappeared.

More serious allegations followed. Walsh and other child-protection advocates had been claiming that as many as 1.5 million children vanished each year, 50,000 of them abducted by strangers. The FBI reported a far lower number: 67 cases of children kidnapped by strangers in 1984. Most missing children were runaways who eventually returned home.

"What did I know?" Walsh told *The Herald* a few years later. "I was a broken-hearted father out there battling."

PROFOUND CHANGES

Adam Walsh changed society in subtler ways too.

If there ever was a time when an adult could walk up to a child on a sidewalk and strike up a conversation, it ended with Adam Walsh.

"The ground rule is, you don't have to be polite. Your safety is more important than to be polite," McBride said.

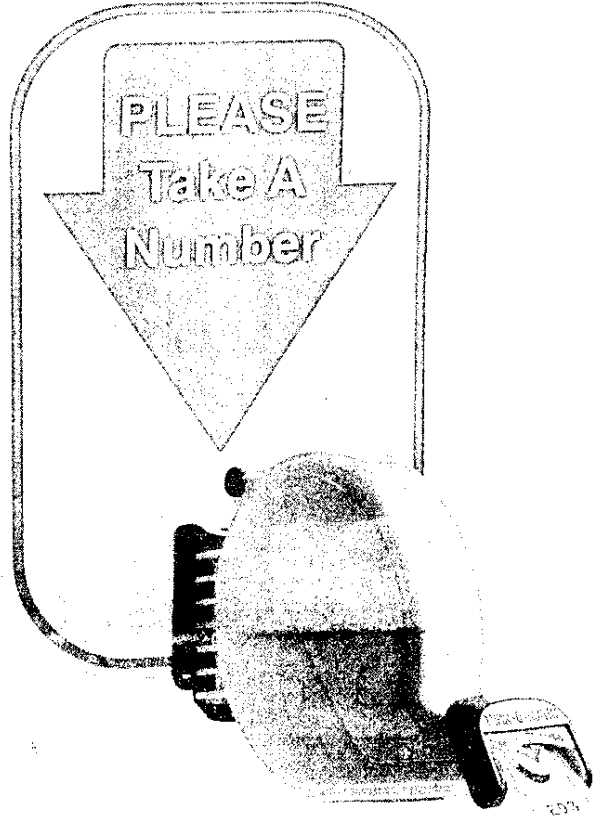
The Adam Walsh case "made a view of the world that it's an extremely dangerous place to live," said Moran, the Mount Holyoke professor.

The debut of *America's Most Wanted* on Feb. 7, 1988 — and its subsequent success in nabbing bad guys — made police departments give his crews unprecedented access.

When FOX network executives tried to cancel the show in 1996 for lackluster ratings, 185,000 people wrote letters to get it back on the air.

For the fall 1996 broadcast that John Walsh thought would be the last, *America's Most Wanted* finally turned to the one unsolved case that even he could not crack.

The segment showed Adam Walsh in his little-league uniform, running the bases and making faces, the flickering images of his final game.



We're experts with numbers. Which is how we know a customer should never be one.

You are not your bank statement. Still, some banks keep getting the two confused. They sell you what's best for them, rather than listening to find out what's best for you. At SunTrust, we start by listening. Because we know when we put people first, you get solutions that do more than work on paper. You get solutions that work with your life. Like better personal and business checking packages. More convenient access to your money. The list goes on. All in all, it's just a better way to do business. To see for yourself, drop by any of our 1100 convenient locations. Or call 1-800-SUNTRUST. We can't wait to find out what we can do for you.



ADAM'S LEGACY

Boy's slaying baffles police 20 years later

As the trail grows colder, investigators have only their hunches and old clues to guide them.

BY JOHN HOLLAND
STAFF WRITER

He may be dead, in prison or stalking another victim. The only thing certain is he got away with murder.

Twenty years after someone snatched Adam Walsh from the Hollywood Mall and decapitated him, police haven't caught his killer and probably never will.

They have plenty of suspects — some buried, some crazy, some little more than hunches by

Last of three parts frustrated detectives around the country.

But none strong enough to be charged in an investigation marred by lost evidence, sloppy police work and time, which has eroded memories and most hopes of finding out what really happened.

"It's been 20 years, and I think it's going to be very difficult to pull together a case and make it stick," said Hollywood Lt. Tony Rode. "There were mistakes made, we admit that. And people's recollections of events aren't the same."

Not much is the same since the July 27, 1981, afternoon when Adam Walsh vanished. His father, John Walsh, has become a celebrity, an energetic new detective is in charge of the case, and the best suspect is long dead.

What remains constant is the jarring description of Adam circulated by police during their search. "The Walsh boy was described as a white male, 45 pounds, 3½ feet tall with sandy blond hair, hazel eyes and missing two front teeth," the *Fort Lauderdale News* reported in its first story about the case.

Two weeks later, on Aug. 10, fishermen found Adam's head floating in a Vero Beach canal,



GRISLY FIND: Hollywood Police Sgt. Dennis Maylon, on Aug. 11, 1981, looks over the Vero Beach canal where Adam Walsh's severed head was found floating by fishermen a day earlier. The head has been kept as evidence all these years. **Staff file photo**

■ ADAM CONTINUES ON 12A

ADAM'S LEGACY



"The department was pretty overwhelmed by the case. This is one of the biggest murder investigations ever, really, and it was probably too big for us at that time."

SGT. MARK SMITH, HOLLYWOOD POLICE DETECTIVE WHO TOOK OVER THE CASE IN 1994

1981 killing still perplexing

ADAM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

124 miles north of Hollywood. The rest of his body was never recovered and the case remains open, even though there have been no developments in years.

The prime suspect, a Jacksonville drifter named Ottis Toole, died in prison in 1996 after confessing to more than 100 murders. Toole, a self-described transvestite and lover of Texas serial killer Henry Lee Lucas, claimed to be a cannibal and twice confessed to killing Adam, only to recant each time.

His admissions remain tainted, in part because a Jacksonville detective fed Toole inside information and manipulated the dimwitted man in hopes of selling the book and movie rights, according to Broward Sheriff's Office investigative files.

It wasn't the only misstep in the case, which a Walsh family attorney said was conducted by "the biggest bunch of bungling idiots since the Keystone Kops."

Bloody carpet from Toole's 1971 Cadillac disappeared — as did the car itself. Blood found on a machete that may have been the murder weapon also vanished, and early clues became blurred by poor record-keeping and little follow-up, police now say.

Each day brought seemingly stranger twists, with oddballs and well-intentioned residents calling with tips, confessions and spiritual visions.

More than two dozen psychics offered to help John and Revé Walsh find their son, some even holding a séance at the Hollywood Mall.

A TOUGH CASE

One Hollywood man claimed to know what happened and told police he had seen pictures of the killing. Days later, he admitted making up the whole story because police were about to tow his car and he thought they would be more lenient with him if he could help solve the Walsh murder.

Even Milwaukee serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer made the list of suspects who were questioned.

But overlooked in the craziness, police say, was that the crime was so simple and so dastardly that there was little detectives could do to solve it and even less the family could do to keep it from happening.

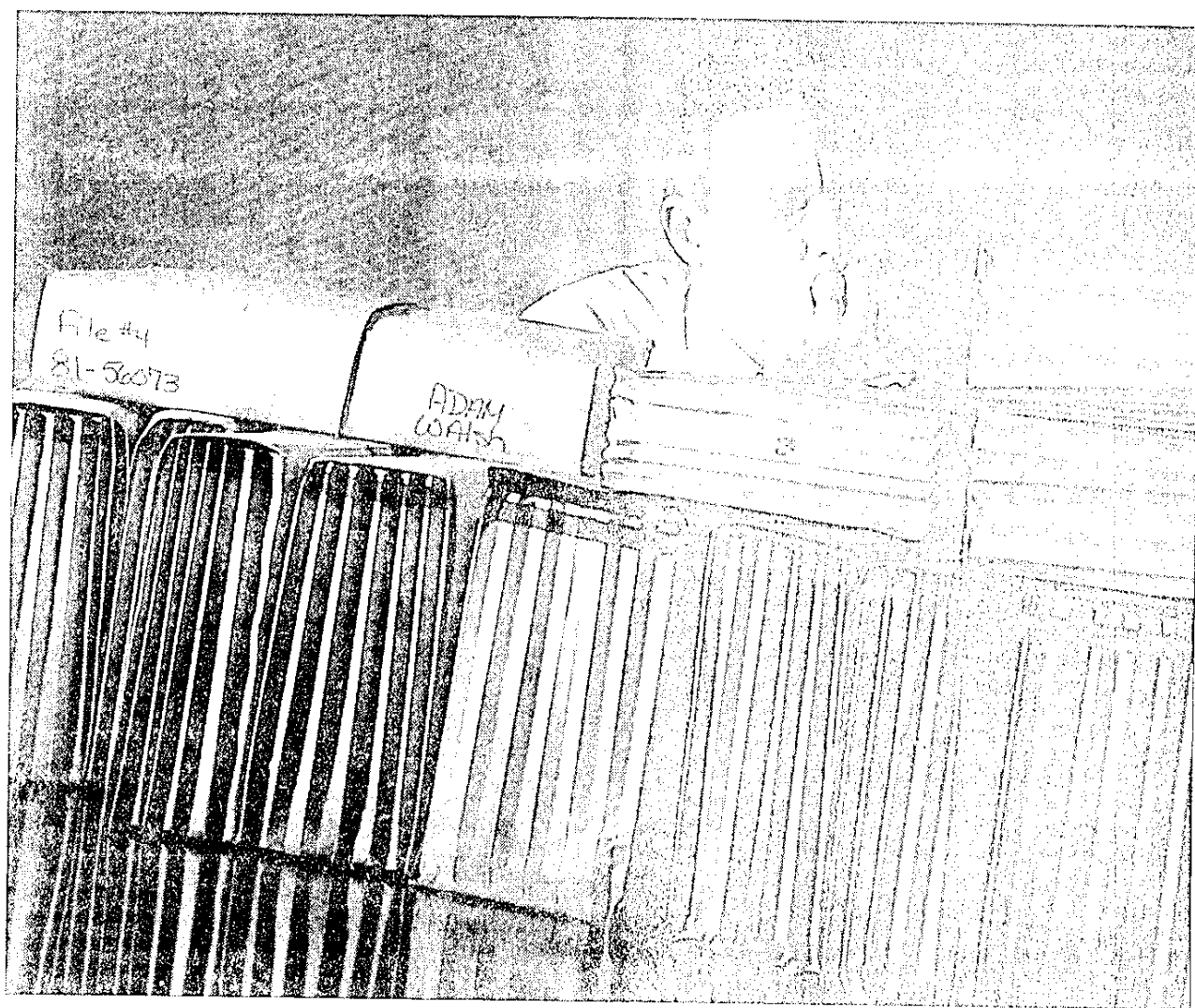
"Unfortunately, we have a lot of sick, deranged people out there who don't need a reason for what they do," said Hollywood Police Detective Sgt. Mark Smith, who took over the case in 1994. "That's what makes this a difficult case."

Within hours of Adam's disappearance, friends and relatives started searching the family's McKinley Street neighborhood, the number of volunteers swelling to about 50 by nightfall. A police helicopter and 22 off-duty officers joined the search, which lasted until about 2 a.m.

One of those searching was Smith, a rookie officer working the midnight shift. He remembers being approached by John Walsh, who asked how the hunt was going.

"I had a picture of Adam up over my visor and I flipped it down and told John that we're all looking for him, so don't worry," said Smith, who 13 years later picked up the founding case and became one of the few Hollywood detectives praised by Walsh. "I just wanted to make sure he understood that we cared and everyone was trying."

Over the next decade, it often didn't seem that way to Walsh, who strongly criticized both the department and the detectives who



THE EVIDENCE: Hollywood Detective Sgt. Mark Smith sits behind mounds of evidence about the Walsh case, which he took over in 1994. "Unfortunately, we have a lot of sick, deranged people out there who don't need a reason for what they do," Smith said. "That's what makes this a difficult case." Staff photo/Mike Stocker

ABOUT THIS SERIES

SUNDAY

Adam Walsh's abduction and murder changed the way America dealt with missing children's cases, touching institutions from law enforcement to business to Congress.

MONDAY

For John Walsh, Adam's death brought celebrity, a livelihood and the reward of helping hundreds of other crime victims.

TODAY

Lost evidence. Sloppy police work. The death of the prime suspect. After 20 years, one of South Florida's most notorious crimes has never been solved.

preceded Smith. A review of the case file and interviews with Hollywood police officers show that Walsh's complaints may be justified.

Days after Adam disappeared, police started hypnotizing witnesses, including a 10-year-old boy. The tactic added little except confusion to the investigation.

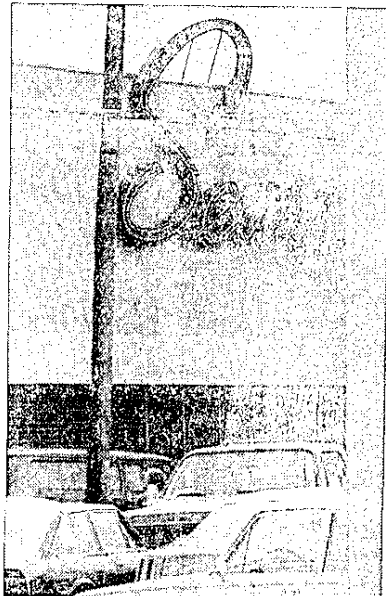
"NO CLUES, NO LEADS ..." Despite a flood of tips, detectives were soon stumped.

"It's extremely frustrating," former Hollywood Detective Jack Hoffman said at the time. "We've got no clues, no leads, no evidence and no motives."

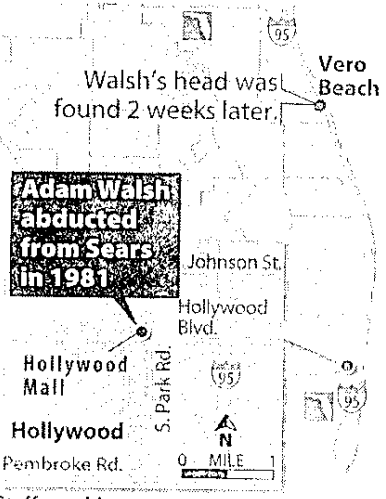
The case was only a few weeks old and already going nowhere. Then, on Aug. 27, one month after Adam had disappeared and about two weeks after his head was found, police cut the investigation to three detectives.

"It can't go on forever. The manpower is needed in other places," said Hoffman, who was heading the investigation.

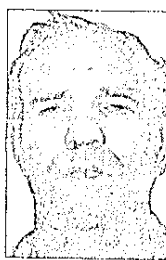
Detectives had too many leads to chase and sometimes became overwhelmed, Hollywood police now say. Records show they may have overlooked some of the best tips while following more of the questionable ones.



SITE OF THE DISAPPEARANCE: The Sears store from where Adam Walsh was abducted on July 27, 1981, no longer stands at the Hollywood Mall. Staff photo/Ursula Seemann



In one instance, detectives drove to Vero Beach and spent two days following a lead from a man who said the CIA had killed Adam. The man claimed the agency was sending him a warning to keep him quiet because he knew the real



Ottis Toole, thought by some to be a prime suspect in Adam's murder, died in prison in 1996. He made no deathbed statement.

secrets of Watergate.

Hoffman went searching for the supposed CIA agent. He couldn't find him at first, but eventually reached him for a full interview before clearing him.

In November 1981, attention turned to Edward James of Pompano Beach. He had been arrested for abducting a 10-year-old boy, and a cellmate at the Broward County Jail said James had confessed to killing Adam.

Police learned James had disappeared from his apartment for two weeks around the time of the murder. They also found that he had installed a new seat cover in the front seat of his 1973 Plymouth Fury on Aug. 27, 1981.

Police interviewed the cellmate, John Russell Terry, whose account of the killing — including a description of the crime scene and James supposedly kicking the head into a canal — was very similar to the physical evidence.

They got a search warrant for James' car. But the investigative notes don't have a transcript of James' interview and don't explain why he was ignored after that.

Those types of mistakes bothered Smith when he took over the dead-end case in August 1994. While he is careful not to criticize Hoffman and others, he wonders if the massive, nationwide search proved too much for what was then a small police force.

"The investigation of Edward James was not handled to my satisfaction, and let's just leave it at that," Smith said in a recent interview.

Hoffman, who was removed from the detective bureau in 1994 and plans to retire next month, did

not return phone calls seeking comment.

In 1995, Smith tracked down James and interviewed him, coming away convinced he probably didn't kill Adam.

"I think the biggest weakness I found would have been the lack of follow-up on some leads," Smith said. "The department was pretty overwhelmed by the case. This is one of the biggest murder investigations ever, really, and it was probably too big for us at that time."

Once he took over, Smith spent weeks reading through the case file, which fills more than a dozen large folders. He excluded no suspects and began looking closely at Toole, who had confessed and recanted twice.

That's when the mistakes jumped out.

In 1983, Toole was sitting in a Jacksonville jail awaiting arson and murder charges that would eventually land him a life sentence. By that time, he and Lucas were infamous, having confessed to some of the nation's most gruesome killings, more than 100 in all.

But many of those confessions were bogus, prompting great skepticism when he confessed to killing Adam. Then, in one interview, he said Lucas killed Adam, even though investigators knew Lucas was in a Maryland jail at the time of the murder.

While some detectives discarded Toole completely, others said he knew too much to be lying. Over the course of several interviews, he provided particularly gruesome and accurate details, and a search of his car found a bloody passenger-side carpet where he said he had placed Adam's head.

At the time, there was no way to determine whether the blood was Adam's. That changed with the advent of DNA testing, and in 1995, Smith decided to test the carpet.

Only he couldn't find it. It had bounced around among three agencies and disappeared. Toole's beat-up old Cadillac also was gone, having been sold and eventually junked for scrap.

"There is absolutely no excuse for losing evidence, no matter how busy the detectives were," Smith said. "I've seen people trying to shift the blame ... but it was our case and we are the only ones responsible. That was ridiculous."

NO DEATHBED DRAMA

By 1995, Toole was dying of hepatitis and other ailments, leaving Smith to hope for a deathbed confession that could be verified. That chance slipped away when state prison officials didn't notify detectives that Toole's death was imminent.

Smith won't say who he thinks killed Adam, afraid his opinion could taint an eventual case. But he isn't convinced Toole is guilty and said detectives were right not to charge him without more evidence. He'll consider the case closed when he has enough to prove someone guilty, whether dead or alive.

Tips still come in, mostly from fans of John Walsh's television program *America's Most Wanted*, but none have been useful.

"Personally, I haven't interviewed anyone in three years," Smith said. "I'm of the belief that you never say never. There is somebody out there that knows what happened and we're going to keep working until we find some answers."

"I really believe we're going to close this case someday."

John Holland can be reached at jholland@sun-sentinel.com or 954-385-7909.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CASE

July 27, 1981: Adam Walsh abducted from Sears in Hollywood Mall.

July 29, 1981: Parents contact psychic Mickie Dahne for help.

Aug. 10, 1981: Adam's severed head found in canal near Vero Beach.

Aug. 12, 1981: Parents offer \$100,000 reward for information leading to arrest.

Aug. 15, 1981: Empty-casket funeral for Adam.

Aug. 27, 1981: Hollywood police scale back investigation to three detectives, saying, "It can't go on forever."

Oct. 18, 1983: Ottis Toole, jailed in Jacksonville on unrelated charges, confesses to killing Adam.

Oct. 21, 1983: Hollywood police announce imminent arraignment of Toole for Adam's murder; no charges are filed.

May 1984: Toole sentenced to death for an arson murder in Jacksonville; later reduced to life in prison.

August 1991: Detectives question

Milwaukee serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, who denies any involvement.

August 1994: Hollywood Detective Sgt. Mark Smith takes over investigation and finds crucial evidence has been lost.

June 1995: Newspapers ask court to release Adam Walsh case file, now 10,000 pages. Smith says he has new,

unnamed suspects.

Feb. 16, 1996: Broward County judge orders file opened.

Sept. 15, 1996: Ottis Toole dies in prison of cirrhosis.

ADAM'S LEGACY

Boy's slaying stirred a nation

Adam's abduction and murder in 1981 raised public awareness and produced legislation to help protect other youngsters.

BY JONATHAN KING
STAFF WRITER

Twenty years ago, his name came over a loudspeaker at the Sears store in Hollywood: "Adam Walsh, please come to customer service."

Who in the shopping aisles on that July day in 1981 would have recognized the name of the lost 6-year-old? Who in South Florida, or across the nation, would not at least turn an ear to such an announcement today?

First of three parts

Two decades after Adam was abducted and his severed head was found in a Vero Beach canal, his name rings synonymous with the missing children's movement.

His father, John Walsh, is a national celebrity with his anti-crime TV show and his tireless work to change how America looks at and for missing children. The image of Adam's gap-toothed smile is stamped on child safety literature nationwide. His legacy has touched institutions from law enforcement to public architecture to business policy to Congress.

"Everyone remembers the story, and it doesn't matter what part of the country you're in," said Debbie Collier, a vice president with Boca Raton-based Sensormatic, a corporate sponsor of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. "What happened with Adam Walsh in South Florida 20 years ago created a cultural change across America."

■ ADAM CONTINUES ON 14A



ABDUCTED: Fliers and posters carried this familiar photo of 6-year-old Adam Walsh in 1981. Not long after his disappearance, Adam's severed head was found in a Vero Beach canal. His name is synonymous with the missing children's movement.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

TODAY

Adam Walsh's abduction and murder changed the way America dealt with missing children's cases, touching institutions from law enforcement to business to Congress.

MONDAY

For John Walsh, Adam's death brought celebrity, a livelihood and the reward of helping hundreds of other crime victims.



TUESDAY

Lost evidence. Sloppy police work. The death of the prime suspect. After 20 years, one of South Florida's most notorious crimes has never been solved.

ADAM'S LEGACY



"... The fear that parents have that their child might be kidnapped shouldn't be diminished. The true change is that law enforcement is now much more prepared to act when it does happen."

MARTIN L. FORST, AUTHOR OF MISSING CHILDREN: RHETORIC AND REALITY

'Everyone is more vigilant'

ADAM
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

On July 27, 1981, Adam's mother took him to the Hollywood Mall to do some shopping. They were in the Sears store, where several other kids had gathered in front of a video game in the toy department. Pac-Man was a new fascination.

Revé Walsh let Adam stay and watch while she shopped a few aisles away. When she returned, he and the other children were gone. She began calling his name. She approached other shoppers. She told a security guard. After more than half an hour, they made a fruitless "come to customer service" announcement to a 6-year-old.

"Cash registers kept ringing up sales. Clerks kept waiting on people as if nothing had happened," Revé described in John Walsh's book *Tears of Rage*. "I was trying to think of the words to make them see that something was really out of whack. That something was going on that just wasn't right. I couldn't just go up to the counter and say, 'I have a missing child,' because in those days, there was no such thing."

STORES ON ALERT

Almost twice a month in the summer of 2001, a "Code Adam" alert comes over the speaker system at the Wal-Mart store on West Sunrise Boulevard. The announcement, named after Adam Walsh, means a child has been reported missing in the store.

The employees know their roles. A brief description of the child is announced and they all stop their work to look. Some are immediately assigned to immediately watch all exits to make sure the child doesn't leave the store.

Within 10 minutes, if the child is not found or is seen with someone other than a parent or guardian, the local police department is called.

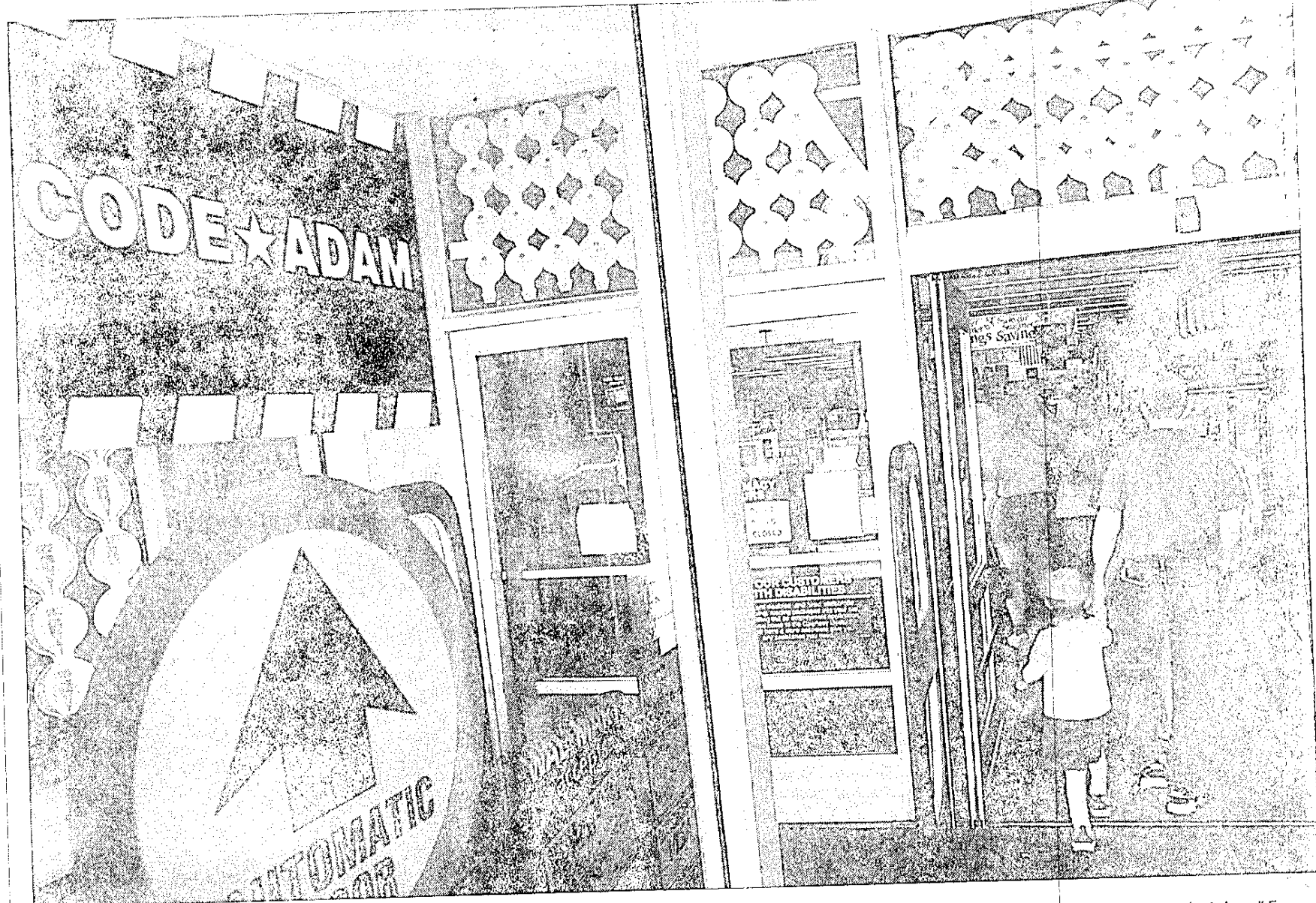
The Code Adam program, created in 1993 by Wal-Mart employees, is used at 15,000 stores across the country including Gap, Home Depot, Kmart and Office Max.

"The awareness that [the Walsh case] brought is immeasurable," says Sharon Weber, spokeswoman for Wal-Mart nationwide. "There's much more responsibility expected of corporations now than 20 years ago. People are much more concerned about missing children. Everyone is more vigilant."

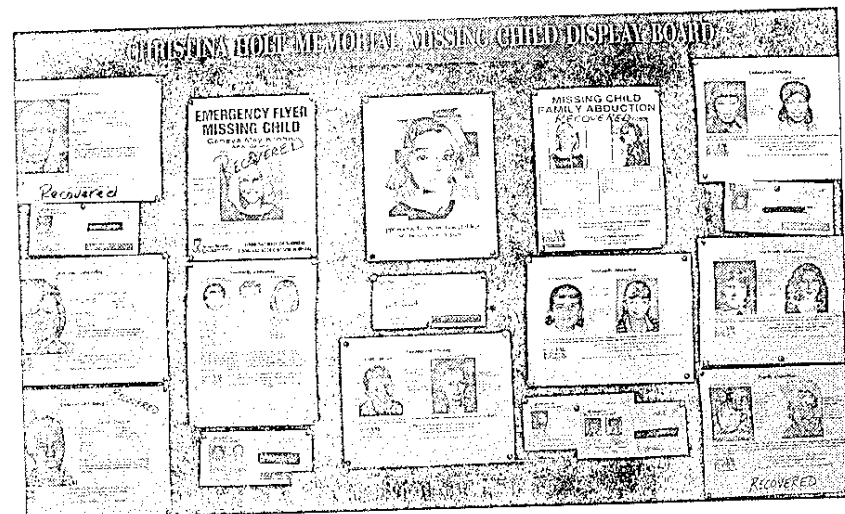
In 2001, almost every retail outlet has surveillance cameras recording who comes and goes through its doors. Almost every large mall has computerized parking lot cameras, some so sophisticated they can pick up license plate numbers.

At Chuck E Cheese pizza playgrounds nationwide, parents and children get their hands stamped with matching numbers when they arrive and are checked when they leave to make sure the right child leaves with the right adult.

Architects design school



SPECIAL ALERT: "Code Adam" stickers appear on the doors at the Wal-Mart store at Sawgrass Mills mall. If a child is missing, the store goes into "Code Adam." Every employee is called into action to look for the child, and all exits are checked for the missing child. Staff photo/Mike Stocker



BULLETIN BOARD: Fliers describing missing people are posted at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in North Palm Beach. The board is named for Christina Holt, a missing girl found murdered. Staff photo/Scott Fisher

buildings with single points of entry to help safeguard children and to keep strangers off the premises. On field trips, children wear color-coded T-shirts. Fingerprinting programs for youngsters and even DNA samplings are common. Movie celebrity Jamie Lee Curtis is the spokeswoman for a Ford Motor Co. campaign to distribute child identification kits to keep kids safe.

The heightened awareness follows two decades of missing children images on billboards, milk cartons, shopping bags and advertising fliers. After the Adam Walsh case, entrepreneurs even made a profit selling leash-like child restraints to a nervous public.

estimates that 3,200 to 4,600 of those were abductions by strangers.

"There have been tremendous reactive changes. But the behaviors of people haven't changed," says social scientist Martin L. Forst, author of *Missing Children: Rhetoric and Reality*.

"The majority of missing children are still runaways and parental abductions. But the fear that parents have that their child might be kidnapped shouldn't be diminished. The true change is that law enforcement is now much more prepared to act when it does happen."

CHANGING THE LAW

Two hours after Adam Walsh disappeared, police were called. His mother and grandmother had swept the mall in a growing panic. John Walsh had arrived and was trying to work with the uniformed officers, whose headquarters were only a parking lot away, across Hollywood Boulevard.

Other than a short, local "be on the lookout" radio dispatch, little was done. "There was apparently nothing in the book, no page in the manual, for what to do in this emergency. What to do if a little boy went missing," Walsh wrote in his book.

Twenty years later, there are

more than a few pages in the manual. Every large police department in the country has a missing persons unit and many have specific protocols for reports of missing children.

"An officer is going to respond immediately when you hear that a child is missing and they're going to start prioritizing right away," says Vickie Smith, a missing persons investigator for the past 12 years with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office. "Twenty years ago, I don't think they had that kind of urgency."

In 1981, only the officers in Hollywood would have heard Adam's "be on the lookout" broadcast. For the first several hours, only the people his mother showed Adam's picture to knew what he looked like. It took a week for the FBI to become actively involved.

In 2001, all that has changed. "The difference is night and day," says Nancy McBride, director of prevention education for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children in Alexandria, Va. "Today, within minutes, we can alert every police department up and down the road, coast to coast, and even internationally."

ADAM CONTINUES ON 15A

20 years remembered

John Walsh, born in Auburn, N.Y., in 1945, moved to Hollywood in 1965 and was employed by the Diplomat Hotel. He and his wife, Revé, were married in 1971.

July 27, 1981: Six-year-old Adam Walsh abducted from a Sears store in Hollywood.

Aug. 10, 1981: Adam's severed head found in a canal near Vero Beach.

Aug. 15, 1981: Funeral for Adam.

Aug. 19, 1981: Walshes form Adam Walsh Outreach Center for Missing Children.

Oct. 10, 1983: Made-for-television movie *Adam* broadcast.

Oct. 18, 1983: Ottis Toole, jailed in Jacksonville on unrelated charges, says he killed Adam.



Feb. 7, 1988: *America's Most Wanted* debuts on Fox Network; within four days the show leads to its first arrest.

1990: Walsh named FBI's man of the year.



Nov. 9, 1996: AMW returns to the air at the urging of 185,000 viewers, 37 state governors, 55 members of Congress and attorneys general of all 50 states.

July 2001: AMW credited with the arrest of 673 fugitives and the recovery of 29 missing children during show's history.

October 1982: Congress passes the Missing Children Act.

Oct. 6, 1981: Walshes testify before Congress on behalf of Missing Children Act.

Oct. 21, 1983: Hollywood police announce imminent arraignment of Toole in Adam's murder; case later falls apart.

May 1984: John Walsh hosts PBS documentary, *A Parent's Greatest Fear*. Toole sentenced to death for an arson murder, a charge later reduced to life.

June 13, 1984: National Center for Missing and Exploited Children opens in Washington, D.C.

June 1995: Newspapers ask court to release Adam Walsh case file, now 10,000 pages.

Feb. 16, 1996: Broward County judge orders file opened.

Sept. 15, 1996: Toole dies in prison of cirrhosis of the liver.

Sept. 21, 1996: *America's Most Wanted* is canceled, airs its 427th show, profiting the Walsh case.

1997: Walsh publishes his autobiography, *Tears of Rage*.



John Walsh
Sun-Sentinel file photo



Staff graphic

Adam Walsh
Sun-Sentinel file photo
SOURCE: Sun-Sentinel research