

Police Seek Runaway Freed In Court Mix-Up

Girl, 16, Released As Custodians Wait

BY DAVID WELLS
Enquirer Reporter

While counselors waited outside a Hamilton County Juvenile Court hearing room Friday morning to escort Lisa [redacted] back to a drug rehabilitation program, officials at the county's juvenile detention center opened a rear door and allowed the 16-year-old runaway to walk away from custody.

Lisa, described as a chronic drug user who had no money and was not wearing a coat, was still missing Saturday night, according to court and police officials.

She was allowed to leave the detention center at 2020 Auburn Ave. Only minutes after court referee Allen Miller had adjudged her unruly and said she should be returned to the Straight Inc. rehabilitation program that her mother had placed her in last July.

HER MOTHER, Joanne Wilson, Shelby, Mich., said Saturday she was worried about her daughter and angry at a system that would turn a troubled girl out without supervision into unfamiliar city.

Mrs. Wilson said Robert Dugan, superintendent of the detention center, told her that he had escorted Lisa out a rear door of the facility, given her the name of a halfway house, and told her she was free to go.

In the meantime, counselors from Straight, who had heard Miller's ruling, were waiting in a front hallway where prisoners are usually released, to take Lisa back to the rehabilitation program.

The people from Straight were waiting for her. They (detention officials) knew she was supposed to go back to Straight," Mrs. Wilson said.

DUGAN DECLINED to comment on the case to *The Enquirer* Saturday. But Mrs. Wilson said he told her that he let Lisa out the back door because she was afraid she would make a scene in the front hall.

At the time, the hallway was crowded with members of the news media and suspects arrested Friday in a drug crackdown in the Cincinnati Schools.

"He (Dugan) knew she didn't want to go back to Straight. He said he didn't want a scene in front of the reporters. . . He said they had been very busy with the big drug raid, that there had been a lot of confusion and that I would understand if I had seen what it had been like," Mrs. Wilson said.

But she doesn't understand. "Lisa admitted she was unruly and had run away. I can't understand why anyone would let a 16-year-old girl like that just walk away."

THERE MAY have been some confusion at the detention center about the release because Miller's written order released Lisa to her own custody, not Straight's, said Juvenile Judge John O'Connor.

Miller said the order was worded that way because Mrs. Wilson's agreement with Straight is a private arrangement and the rehabilitation program had no real legal standing in the case. However, Miller said it was made clear in the hearing that the court's intent was for Lisa to be returned to Straight. Miller declined further comment on the case, referring questions to O'Connor.

O'Connor was notified of the situation Friday afternoon when it was discovered Lisa was missing. The judge said Saturday he has ordered an internal investigation into the case to find out what went wrong. He said it was "absolutely proper" for Miller to release the girl with the understanding that she be turned over to Straight.

HOWEVER, WHILE the record of the hearing shows the girl should have been turned over to Straight, the wording on the order may have confused officials at the detention center, O'Connor said.

A new runaway warrant has been issued for Lisa and her name and description have been entered into the national police information network, said Det. Jackie Roy of the Wyoming Police Department. Roy became involved in the

case when Lisa ran away from a Wyoming care home March 25.

Lisa is described as 5-foot-8, 159 pounds, with shoulder length blond hair parted in the middle, green eyes and fair complexion. She was last seen wearing a green and red plaid blouse over a white tee shirt, blue jeans, and tan suede shoes.

Anyone with information on her whereabouts was asked to contact Wyoming Police, 821-0141.

LISA GREW up in Michigan with her mother and sisters. According to her mother, the girl started using drugs six years ago. Last year, Mrs. Wilson learned of Straight Inc., a private organization that specializes in drug rehabilitation for teen-agers.

She enrolled her daughter in a Straight's program in Cincinnati July 31, 1982. The girl did well, according to her mother, progressing to the point where Straight assigned her to live in a private home in suburban Wyoming, last January.

On March 25, however, a few hours after a visit from her mother at Wyoming High School, Lisa ran away. "She had said (during the visit) she thought she could handle her problems by herself, that she didn't need the program anymore. But she couldn't. I told her I wanted her to stay with the program. . . She was all right though. There didn't seem to be any big problem. When I left she kissed me."

MRS. WILSON was notified by Straight when Lisa did not return to the Wyoming home from school on the 25th. The mother signed a warrant in Hamilton County Juvenile Court the next day, charging her daughter as an incorrigible runaway. She spent the next two days looking for Lisa — driving up and down Interstate 75, checking on leads she had gotten from her daughter's acquaintances.

On March 29, she was notified that Lisa had turned herself in to the Lebanon Police. Mrs. Wilson went to Lebanon, talked with Lisa, and turned her over to juvenile authorities in Hamilton County. "I

was afraid she would run. I turned her over as a protective custody measure for her."

Mrs. Wilson said she was told that Lisa's court hearing would be held Friday afternoon. She drove back to Shelby to attend to her other three children, planning to return to Cincinnati for the hearing Friday.

HER INTENTION was to ask the court to return Lisa to Straight. "She needs that program. It's helping her." But when she arrived at the detention center about 1 p.m. Friday, she found that the hearing was over and Lisa was gone.

Court officials say she were never informed that Mrs. Wilson was on her way from Michigan, so the hearing was scheduled for the morning rather than afternoon.

O'Connor said he has ordered that in the future when a juvenile balks at returning to a drug rehabilitation program, the case should be reassigned to his docket rather than be handled by referees.

"It was an unfortunate situation, but it is a situation that never occurred before," O'Connor said. "I've created a procedure to deal with it, but unfortunately I created it after the fact."

LISA [redacted] fled rehabilitation unit