

Six People Snatched Youth, 14 Neighbors Saw It, Couldn't Stop It

BY JIM ROHRER
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LOVELAND—The 14-year-old Loveland boy who has been removed from the Straight drug rehabilitation program and reunited with his mother was stolen from outside his father's Loveland home Saturday night, neighbors of the father confirmed Wednesday.

Although the boy's mother, Patricia Wynne, of Maineville, maintained her son "escaped" from the program, neighbors of Walter J. Wynne on Stockton Drive in Loveland said the youth was forcibly taken by six persons who grabbed him and threw him in a panel truck about 11 p.m. Saturday, just as the father and son returned from a Straight meeting in Milford.

THE WYNNES were divorced in April, and Wynne had custody of the son, who was enrolled in the Milford drug rehabilitation program in May.

"We saw it coming down and tried to get the police out here," one neighbor said. "There were five people standing around the street corner, and another man in a panel truck parked several houses up. Unfortunately, the police just didn't get here in time."

What followed was a "professional child-snatching," according to another neighbor, which apparently occurred against the boy's will.

"The boy was yelling, 'Leave me alone, I'm all right,'" a neighbor said. "They also shoved the father out of the way."

Neighbors said the panel truck with the boy inside then drove away with its lights off, followed by a compact car without lights, driven by a man who apparently directed the operation and who had a clipboard in his hand.

LOVELAND POLICE found the empty van in a nearby Kroger's parking lot a short time later. It had been rented from a leasing firm in Patricia Wynne's name, it was learned.

Neither the Wynnes nor their attorneys could comment on the case Wednesday, by terms of an agreement reached Tuesday in Warren County Domestic Relations Court. That agreement came after a scheduled hearing on motions by Mrs. Wynne for a change of custody, and for contempt of court against Wynne for failing to allow her visitation rights with her son while he was in the drug rehabilitation program.

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ED STACH, director of the Straight program in Milford, said incidents of this nature hurt the program. "It really sets back our therapeutic work," he said. "We really feel frustrated, and I feel it's time to talk to the community about these types of things."

Mrs. Wynne has confirmed that her son was suspended from Loveland High School more than once for smoking cigarettes, but she maintained he was not a drug user.

Stach, while not commenting on the case, did say that Straight is very successful in weeding out potential clients who may not be habitual drug users, and said any such potential clients are usually terminated from the program.

James Wasserman, director of the Clermont County Board of Mental Health, said Wednesday he would hesitate in referring any drug-dependent youths to Straight.

Wasserman conceded that the county now has only one full-time drug counselor, but said that by early 1983, his agency, along with Juvenile Court, hopes to triple the size of its drug rehabilitation program.