

Missing girl's mother lives with fear, hope

By Ed Timms
Staff Writer of The News

On a February night one year ago, 9-year-old Christie Proctor left behind a Valentine's Day box, a crushed plastic heart and a mother who still is waiting for her return.

Police say her abduction from a North Dallas residential street less than a block from her apartment is a mystery that has defied solution.

"Thousands and thousands of man-hours on this case, and we've got zilch — nothing," said Sgt. Joe Murdock, of the Dallas police youth division.

Christie's mother, Laura Proctor, lives with anxiety and frustration, but she refuses to remain passive. In addition to rearing a 6-year-old son and maintaining a full-time job as an office manager, she daily spends hours helping others find missing children. She recently founded a non-profit organization dedicated to that cause.

Ms. Proctor continues to distribute posters that describe Christie and the circumstances of her disappearance. For now, she must live without Christie, but as long as there is a chance her daughter is alive, she does not live without hope.

"I know that I am going to find Christie," she said recently from her North Dallas home. "I know she's out there. I don't know when I'm going to find her, but I know that I will."

Christie Proctor, a fourth-grader at J. Frank Doble Elementary School, disappeared Feb. 15, 1986, as she was walking home from a playmate's house. A friend accompanied her most of the way. The husband of a neighbor apparently drove past Christie minutes before she was ab-

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The Dallas Morning News: Richard Michael Pruitt

Laura Proctor (reflected in mirror) works daily on the search for her daughter, Christie, who disappeared Feb. 15, 1986. Christie's picture is in the upper left corner of the mirror.

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ents." Isn't necessity the mother of inve
tion?

Missing girl's mother lives with frustration

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No witness to the abduction has
come forward.

"This was not a secluded area,"
said youth division Lt. David Clary.
"It's hard to believe there wasn't
someone who saw something."

Murdock theorizes that there
still might be a witness who does
not realize what he or she saw.

Christie was due home by 6 p.m.
By 7 p.m., neighbors had joined Ms.
Proctor in her search for Christie.
One neighbor discovered a crushed
purple heart that bore Christie's
name and a white Valentine box
near the apartment. Before 8 p.m.,
police had joined the search.

In the days that followed, friends
and neighbors scoured the neigh-
borhood. The FBI entered the inves-
tigation, which initially focused on
the abduction three days earlier of
a 16-year-old girl who attended
Christie's school, by a man in a
white van. That incident occurred
within blocks of where Christie was
abducted.

The schoolmate was forced to
call her mother on a cellular tele-
phone in the van and report she
had been abducted, according to po-
lice reports. She was released after
being told by the suspect that he
would abduct her again — and not
let her go — if she was seen walking
alone in the neighborhood again.

Clary said investigators have not
been able to prove a connection be-
tween Christie's abduction and that
of her schoolmate three days ear-
lier.

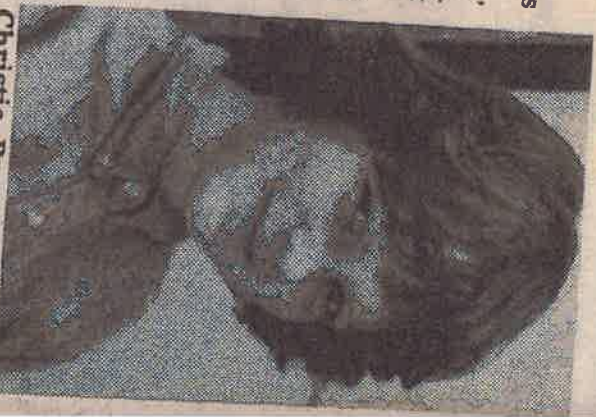
The motive for Christie's abduc-
tion, like almost everything else
connected to the case, is unknown.
No ransom demand was made. Po-
lice have uncovered no evidence
that Christie has been harmed.

Taped to the wall of the youth di-
vision office is an aging poster of-
fering a \$20,000 reward for informa-
tion on Christie's whereabouts. On
Clary's desk is a stack of folders — a
year's accumulation of leads that
led nowhere.

Posters of Christie have been dis-
tributed nationwide. She frequently
is featured in public-service notices
on missing children. Dallas police
continue to receive reports of sight-
ings, but typically the information
is days late and incomplete.

Murdock recalls one individual
who reported seeing Christie with a
dog in the back of a pickup truck.
The witness "gave a good descrip-
tion of the dog that was with her,
but didn't know the license num-
ber," Murdock said.

For now, Clary said, activity on
the case is contingent on "workable
leads." Ms. Proctor, he adds, con-



Christie Proctor . . . disap-
peared Feb. 15, 1986.

ing at all on the case, I get really
down," she said. "When the case is
active and the leads are coming in,
that keeps me pretty busy and keeps
me going."

Christie's 11th birthday is Feb.
28. Murdock says she has not

"That's building myself up for
another big letdown," she said.
"And I can't do that, because I've
been on too many emotional roller
coasters. I just pray that Christie
has some happiness and some joy,
wherever she is. And I just have to
be comforted by the fact that some-
day she will be with us."

On Monday, Ms. Proctor is sched-
uled to meet with a tax attorney to
prepare forms applying for tax-ex-
empt status for the Christie Proctor
Search Foundation/Texas Associa-
tion for Stolen Children. Ms. Proc-
tor said the organization was
formed in November.

Instructing children, parents
and teachers on the threat of child
abduction is a primary objective of
the organization.

"Kids need to be aware this is a
fact of life," Ms. Proctor said. "It's a
problem growing by leaps and
bounds." She wants children to be
wary, not afraid.

"It's just like crossing the street,"
Ms. Proctor said. "If you don't look
both ways, it's likely you're going to
get hit by a car."

But she acknowledges that fear
can never be completely removed
from the consciousness of a parent.

"I had instructed my children
very thoroughly on safety," she
said. "And something still hap-
pened. I don't know what it is yet,
but Christie was very well aware. It
was in broad daylight, half a block