

## 18 CANDLES , NO ONE TO BLOW THEM OUT

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Friday, June 8, 1990  
Author: MARTY HAIR Free Press Staff Writer

Happy 18th birthday, Cindy Jo Zarzycki. Your family has some news for you:

Grandpa Ed is recovering from a stroke. He can't walk. It would really cheer him up **to** hear from you.

Your little brother, Eddie, is now a 5-foot, 10-inch high school honors student. He misses you, as does Connie, your older sister, who is now married and has a new baby, a sweet, bald 8-month-old named Sam.

Because today is your birthday and **18** is a milestone in becoming independent, Grandma Franny hopes you'll finally feel free **to** make contact with your family. **No** questions asked.

"If she would just call and say, 'I'm OK,' we wouldn't even look anymore," your grandmother, Frances Zarzycki, said.

Call her now, as you used **to** call her every day before you left for school. She'd give anything **to** bake you an apple pie with a thick layer of sugar on top, just the way you like it.

Above all, Cindy, call your dad. Each day, your disappearance haunts Edward Zarzycki, still working for East Detroit Schools, now as a carpenter.

Whenever he sees a young blond woman with your gait, with anything resembling your electric smile, he prays it will be you. The constant search possesses him -- at the mall, around the neighborhood, even on vacation in Florida.

Runaway children are sadly common. Last year alone, Michigan State Police arrested 1,516 runaways ages 13 and 14. Those gone as long as Cindy are rare.

"Usually, they turn up eventually," said East Detroit Police Youth Officer Don Placke, but in Cindy's case, "we have **no** leads on where she might be."

Placke said police have checked the bodies of two unidentified white females discovered in the metropolitan area since Cindy disappeared. They were not Cindy.

Zarzycki last saw his daughter the morning of April 20, 1986, when she was 13. Now, he is living **out** every parent's nightmare.

"Sometimes I get depressed, thinking about her," he said quietly this week. "I really miss her."

Once again scrutinizing emotions and events they have relived thousands of times in the 50 months since Cindy vanished, the Zarzyckis said they had **no** indication Cindy would run away.

She lived with her father, brother and sister in East Detroit, and continued **to** see her mother, Alice, frequently after her parents' 1980 divorce.

Cindy was on good terms with her relatives, according **to** her father, even though he had grounded her shortly before she disappeared because she stayed too late at the mall.

She had played on a church softball team for two years, winning a trophy as most valuable player. The day before she vanished, Cindy persuaded her dad **to** form a new team so her friends could play together, and talked her grandmother into buying her new shoes. She never wore **them** .

The morning of April 20, she declined her father's invitation **to** go **out** for breakfast, saying she was going **to** meet a friend at the Dairy Queen and then go **to** a function at church. She played a game of catch with her brother. Then she left.

Later, somebody who'd been at the Dairy Queen said a girl resembling Cindy had gotten into a blue car. A friend told the family she might have been headed for a party in Pontiac.

When Cindy hadn't returned by that evening, her father started driving the streets. In the morning, he went **to** the police.

**No one** seems **to** know where Cindy went.

Her case was on a local TV show in March, and her photo and description have appeared in a publication distributed at truck stops. There is a \$1,500 reward for information. The Missing Children Help Center, a nonprofit group in Florida, put her name and photo on fliers and milk cartons.

Edward and Frances Zarzycki believe someone lured Cindy away, perhaps someone who prevented her from returning **to** or at least making contact with her family. Both feel instinctively that she is still alive.

But, as parents of missing youngsters often do, Cindy's 43- year-old father blames himself for her disappearance. He believes he should have taken Cindy's athletic success more seriously. He wonders about scholastic problems that had surfaced a few weeks before she disappeared, and about some new friends. But, "they have questioned everybody," he said of police.

"If there had been a lot of problems with her, I'd probably have more of an idea," he said. "It's confusing. Where would anybody go? Or why?"

When she disappeared, Cindy was a hazel-eyed eighth grader at Kelly Junior High. At 125 pounds and 5-feet-6-inches tall, she looked older than 13. Very loving. Probably too trusting.

"She was in a Cyndi Lauper phase when she left, like she wanted **to** shave the side of her head," said her mother, Alice, a cook at a Roseville restaurant. "It was a mild stage of rebellion, normal teenage things."

Every Sweetest Day, every Valentine's Day when she can afford it, Alice Zarzycki puts classified ads in the Detroit newspapers asking, "Cindy Jo, where did you go?" She has kept the same phone number, hoping Cindy will call.

"Maybe she didn't feel we loved her at the time," said Alice Zarzycki, 42. But **no** matter what has happened, she hopes Cindy will call because she has so many relatives who "would do anything **to** let her know that we love her."

She stopped working as a waitress because the sight of young girls with blond hair upset her so much. Now Alice Zarzycki thinks about the senior prom, the graduation Cindy should be enjoying.

"This year is very hard," she said. " **No** matter where she is, there are things she's doing without and I wish I could have given her."

Desperate for hope, the family looks **to** Cindy's 18th birthday. Maybe, just maybe, that will prompt her **to** call.

"I'll never give up. Never," Frances Zarzycki vowed. "Would you?"

Anyone with information about Cindy Zarzycki should call the East Detroit Police at 775-0400 anytime, or the Missing Children Help Center, 800-USA-KIDS, anytime.

Caption: Photo Color JOHN COLLIER

: Edward Zarzycki and his son, Edward Jr., hold a picture of Cindy Zarzycki, missing since 1984. Cindy Zarzycki, at 13, was her softball team's MVP.

\*\*\*

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: WWL

Page: 1F

Index Terms: MISSING ; CHILD ; BIRTHDAY ; MICHIGAN ; CINDY ZARZYCKI ;  
HOTLINE

Record Number: 9001220410

Copyright (c) 1990 Detroit Free Press