

■ **MISSING:** Family hopes for break in cold case

# Whatever happened to Diane Prevost?

BY DENIS ST. PIERRE

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Back in the 1960s, Blezard Valley's Prevost family spent many happy summer days at Grundy Lake Provincial Park.

Saturday, Sept. 17, 1966, was supposed to be such a day, with the Prevost clan — children, their parents and grandparents — enjoying a late-season excursion to the popular park, about an hour south of Sudbury.

"We would all go there ... for fishing, swimming," recalls Lise (Prevost) Nastuk. "My grandpar-



(Above left) Diane in 1966 and what she might look like today, as sketched by Diana P. Trepkov.

ents had a camper and we would go there with them often."

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■ **MISSING:** Family wants closure

# 'The more help we get ... the better'

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On that late-summer day in 1966, Bernard and Claire Prevost took their four young children, ranging in age from two to five, down to the beach at Grundy Lake. Grandparents Therese and Adolias Prevost remained behind at the campsite, taking a nap.

It was a typical, relaxing day, with dad Bernard fishing from the dock and mom Claire on the shore with youngsters. While Joanne, Claude and Lise searched for frogs at the water's edge, the youngest of the four kids, two-year-old Diane played in the sand.

Eventually, little Diane told her parents she wanted to return to the campsite to be with her grandparents. Bernard told his daughter he would take her back as soon as he untangled his fishing line. But during a brief moment that the mother and father had turned their heads, Diane disappeared into the adjacent woods.

Initially, the parents assumed the toddler had taken a head start in returning to the family's nearby trailer. But when Claire Prevost ran back to the campsite, her daughter was nowhere to be found.

It didn't take long for panic to set in, as parents and grandparents began searching frantically for their little girl. When they didn't find her they called the Ontario Provincial Police. Police officers, natural resources officers and other campers soon joined the search, but by night-



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fall Diane remained missing. The girl's father and grandfather continued to search throughout the night, to no avail.

By sunrise the following day, dozens of searchers had arrived at the park, assisted by a tracking dog, a police airplane and scuba divers. The search continued for four weeks, without result, leaving the Prevost family shattered.

For more than four decades, "there's been a void in our lives," says Nastuk, who was 3 1/2 when her sister disappeared.

"People cannot imagine what this does to a family," she says on a website recently created to revive public attention to Diane's case.

"I don't know how my parents have survived this tragedy," Nastuk says. "This pain has

never gone away, even after all these years. There is no closure; it's an open wound that won't heal."

The Prevost family has always believed Diane was kidnapped. Their only hope has been that Diane, who would be 45, survived and that her abductors' motive was to raise the girl as their own.

"Over the years, we have tried different attempts at finding her without any success," Nastuk says.

After nearly 43 years, the family's hopes have been rekindled by its new website and the help of internationally recognized forensic identification artist Diana Trepkov.

The Ajax-based Trepkov recently completed an age-pro-

gression drawing showing what a 45-year-old Diane Prevost might look like today.

Trepkov has helped police and families in dozens of cases of missing and unidentified people in Canada and the United States. During a recent appearance on the nationally broadcast Canada AM program, she made a brief reference to the Diane Prevost case.

The Prevost family contacted Trepkov after learning of the artist's work on a kidnapping case in the U.S. Trepkov readily obliged, not only creating the age-progression drawing of Diane Prevost, but also offering to help the family publicize the case with media organizations.

"Everything was dormant for so long, the family didn't know what to do, so they asked for my help," Trepkov says. "The more help we get from the media and the public, the better, because there is a chance that she is alive. You never know."

Trepkov used childhood photos of Diane, as well as photos of the girl's siblings and parents, to create the age-progression drawing.

Lise Nastuk says the drawing of her sister as an adult initially evoked surreal feelings.

"It took me a few days for it to sink in, that she is an adult, because we've always thought of her as a baby," she says. "She looks like my older sister (Joanne); we see the resemblance there."

The Prevost family also learned recently that the OPP had lost track of Diane's case over the years and could not find the file.

However, the OPP has reopened the file, assigned an officer to it and is committed to doing what it can to bring attention to the case, Nastuk says.

"Diane's picture is going to be on the police website and she's been added to their missing persons database."

Meanwhile, Diane Prevost's parents and grandparents have mixed feelings about the latest developments, says Nastuk.

"My parents and grandparents are getting up in age and so far there's been nothing, nothing to say what happened," she says. "They're not hoping for anything, but really they are."

While the family received tremendous support at the time of Diane's disappearance, it also endured unfounded accusations and scorn, particularly from anonymous phone calls, Nastuk says.

With Diane's case receiving renewed attention, her parents "are a little leery, because back in '66 there was a lot of support, but there was a lot negativity around the case."

"There were some mean people out there."

To learn more about the case or to contact the family, visit its website at [www.dianeprevost.info](http://www.dianeprevost.info) or [dstpierre@thesudburystar.com](mailto:dstpierre@thesudburystar.com)