

# The News Journal

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## Returned Son Answers Dad's Prayer

David Maul  
STAFF REPORTER

The phone call Karl Gude waited 14 months for came at 6 p.m. last Monday.

The voice on the other end told Gude his five-year-old son, Eric, had been found in Galveston, Texas and child's mother, Marilyn Teresa Leguy, 39, had been taken into custody on child abduction charges.

A little more than 24 hours later, Eric was catching frogs, soaring into the air on a swing and chasing the family dogs in the back yard of Gude's Clarksville home.

"I've thought about this day for 14 months," said Gude, who flew to Galveston with his wife, Anne, last Tuesday to pick up Eric. The trio returned home at about 1:30 a.m. Wednesday.

Gude had not seen his son since June 1992, when Leguy fled the state with the child, violating a family court order giving Gude partial custody. During Leguy's absence, the court granted Gude emergency custody of the child.

Leguy, a hairdresser, is the former operator of Marilyn's Magic Shears on Route 26 in Millville.

### 'Answer To Our Prayers'

Police arrested Leguy after a neighbor answered a full-page ad placed in a Galveston newspaper by the American Association for Lost

Children.

"They were the answer to our prayers," Gude said of the association, which located Leguy late Monday afternoon and called police.



She was released from Galveston County Jail after posting \$2,000 bond.

Eric was held by foster care officials following the arrest and talked to his father on the phone Monday night.

After a flight to Texas and 20

minutes of paperwork, Gude had custody of Eric early Tuesday afternoon. "I couldn't believe the paperwork went that easy."

Gude said Eric is in good health but has talked little about the events of the past year.

"I'm starting to get bits and pieces from him now," he said, noting the child may not understand what has happened. "He just knows he's with dad."

"Everything is new to him again here," he added. "He's probably capable at this point of sleeping anywhere. He's street wise now."

*"These children are the ones who truly suffer. What was Eric really told about his father?"*

*... Deborah Hill  
AALC*

Eric will be enrolled at Lord Baltimore Elementary school this fall and Gude hopes to put the child back on a normal schedule.

### 'Hole In Our Life'

Gude was not sure what Eric had been told during his year on the run but noted he had been treated well.

"There was a hole in our life that couldn't be filled by anything," said Anne Gude. "Now we'll begin our normal life, hopefully. I'm relieved that it's over."

It could be two or three months before Eric gets used to living a normal life. He will probably ask questions about his mother and request to see her, she added.



Photo by DAVID MAULL

**REUNITED AT LAST** — Karl and Anne Gude of Clarksville have had their prayers answered as they found young Eric in Texas

Karl Gude spent part of the afternoon going from store to store in Clarksville happily removing missing-person signs he'd posted a year ago. Though he hadn't had more than five hours sleep in the last 24 hours, he never tired of picking up and hugging his son.

But the return of his child does not mean the end of Gude's efforts to inform people about missing children.

Mark Miller, founder of the Houston-based American Association for Lost Children, said the newspaper ad offered a \$999 reward for information leading to Leguy's arrest. A tip was received within hours of publication.

"We acted right away," said Miller, who informed Gude of the tip before traveling to Galveston.

After arriving at Leguy's residence, a female volunteer went to the front door with a picture of a

lost cat and asked Leguy if she had seen the animal. The volunteer confirmed her identity before Miller called police.

By placing the ad, the association took a risk that Leguy would see the paper and skip town, said Miller, who believes she may have lived in Florida for a short time.

When the Gudes returned home early Wednesday morning, they were greeted with balloons and "Welcome Home Eric" signs along the driveway and outdoor deck of their home.

Gude left his bed a number of times during the night, each time looking into Eric's bedroom to convince himself the events of the past 36 hours had not been a dream.

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