

1 year after 18-year ordeal Dugard tries to regain her life

By Kathryn Reed

One year ago today Jaycee Lee Dugard was released from the horror she had known for the previous 18 years. Those formative years from age 11 to 29 were spent cloistered in a ramshackle backyard compound in the Bay Area. After being kidnapped from her school bus stop in Meyers, she was repeatedly raped, bore two children to the man accused of raping her and was unable to tell her children what their father had done to her.

Dugard is free now. At least to some extent.

Normal as most people define it is not likely to be something Dugard, her daughters or even her mother, Terry Probyn, will ever know. For now, the four are living in an undisclosed location in California.

“We have an agent in the area where they are living now,” FBI agent Chris Champion told *Lake Tahoe News* this week. He worked the case when Dugard was snatched from the street in 1991. He was there a year ago as news was coming from the Bay Area that she had been found.



Jaycee Lee

Dugard and her
mom, Terry
Probyn.

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The agent in the vicinity of the Dugards speaks to them weekly, if not more. How long the FBI will be involved is anyone's guess.

"We take the needs of the victims and witnesses very seriously, especially in these kinds of cases where there is uncharted territory," Campion said. "We don't know what their needs are going to be over the years. There are a just a ton of things you don't think about."

One thing the FBI helped sort out was obtaining birth certificates for the girls. The older one turns 16 this month, while the younger will be 13 in November.

The two didn't attend school, though reports are they are bright despite no formal education. Dugard was days from finishing fifth grade when she was kidnapped.

This is reportedly the longest time a child has been held captive and found alive. There is no precedent for knowing the psychological ramifications Dugard might endure the rest of her life, let alone her children coming to grips with who their father is and his sordid past.

As for the exact help they are getting, Campion said that is up to the Dugard clan to tell the world.

Probyn had planned to speak to Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe on Wednesday, but canceled days before when it came out that a tabloid had bought pictures of Dugard and her daughters. That unwanted publicity has her rethinking being in public.

Instead, Campion and Lt. Les Lovell of the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department spoke to the private, no-guests invited lunch.

Both spoke with *Lake Tahoe News* earlier in the week. District Attorney Vern Pierson, who is in the middle of a penalty phase of a murder trial, said through his secretary he is not making any comments about the Dugard case at this time.

Law enforcement changes

Campion doesn't think anything could have been done differently on June 10, 1991. He doesn't believe setting up roadblocks sooner would have made a difference, nor the fact that it was the next day before 20 FBI agents swarmed the town. The FBI had a permanent presence on the South Shore at that time and still does.

"In this case, I don't think it would have prevented them from getting out of the basin," Campion said. "It is a good idea to have a roadblock system in place. That is probably one thing we do better now."

At the time of Dugard's kidnapping the FBI was already doing away with the old school policy of waiting 24 to 48 hours for a ransom call. Sexual predators were on their radar screen.

In the time since Dugard was taken, the response to child abductions has been even faster by all branches of law enforcement.

Being proactive is another change. This means getting people off the streets who have a thirst to commit sexual crimes. This is done with nabbing people with child pornography, those distributing it, and people traveling to meet unsuspecting young people they may have met on the Internet.

The local sheriff's department implemented a number of changes, some of which are detailed in this story.

The California parole system has taken a beating for not having found Dugard sooner. The incompetence resulted in a \$20 million payout by the state to the Dugards. Had that aspect gone to trial, speculation is the award would have been much higher.

Whether the family will be able to live a life of normalcy before or after the criminal trial remains to be seen. Again, it's that word, normal.

Not knowing where they are living or the type of help they are getting, it's unknown if the \$20 million will be enough for them to live on for their lifetimes. It's unknown if the teens would want to go to college or be able to even cope in that atmosphere.

A community reacts

Between Soroptimist and the sheriff's department, the program a Fighting Chance was developed. This teaches youngsters to fend off would-be attackers or kidnappers. It even goes into what to do if you are taken.

Even though Dugard, her mom, step-dad and half-sister had only lived on the South Shore a short time before the kidnapping, it rocked the community. The "it can't happen here" syndrome was shattered.

South Lake Tahoe embraced the Probyns as they struggled to carry on with their lives. Years later they would move and divorce.

On Sept. 6, 2009, more than 2,500 walked down Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe to rejoice in Dugard's release. The parade was cathartic for so many who were here in 1991.

The accused

Phillip and Nancy Garrido are sitting in jail cells in Placerville, both accused of kidnapping Dugard; Phillip

Garrido faces rape charges. It came out last week that attorneys in the case are questioning his competency.

The next court hearing is scheduled for Oct. 1.