

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FOI/PA  
DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET  
FOI/PA# 1372462-0

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Memorandum



To : SAC, WMFO (31C-WF-189911) (P) Date 11/8/93

From : SA [redacted] (C-4)

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Subject: "FINDERS" GROUP;  
WSTA - SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN;  
OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE - PI;  
OO: WMFO

Attached to this memo are copies of materials relating to captioned group provided to writer on 11/08/93 by Senior Special Agent [redacted] United States Customs Service, Customs Headquarters, 1301 Constitution Ave, NW, Washington, D.C.

This information is further described as listed below:

1. Copy of "FINDERS" briefing bullets prepared by SA [redacted] for Commissioner, U. S. Customs briefing book.
2. Copy of SA [redacted] memo to file dated 2/7/87.
3. Copy of SA [redacted] memo to file dated 4/13/87.
4. Copy of a NEXUS report prepared by U.S. Customs.
5. Copies of [redacted] 2/7/87, and 4/13/87 memos with names removed together with a "FINDERS" chronology provided to U.S. Customs by a [redacted] of the Tallahassee, Florida Police Department.
6. Copies of Tallahassee Police Department Reports concerning the 2/5/87 [redacted] and subsequent "FINDERS" group investigation.
7. Copy of U.S. Customs RAC Tallahassee case file dated 2/87.
8. Copy of U.S. Customs RAC Reston case file dated 4/13/87.
9. Copy of a magazine article titled "In search of the Finders".

*[Handwritten signature]*

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②-WMFO  
MDC:mdc

*11/10/93*  
*open a Sub M file off of this memo*  
*[Handwritten signature]*

31C-WF-189911 Sub M

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FBI-WASH. FIELD OFFICE	

*[Handwritten signature]*

*Brief Bullets for Commissioner [redacted], prepared  
by SA [redacted]*

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"FINDERS"

On August 23, 1993, I was advised by agents from the SAC/Miami office that they had interviewed [redacted] per request of [redacted] SAC/Miami. They listened to [redacted] reiterate the information he provided earlier to RAC/Ft. Lauderdale and Postal Inspectors and in his letters to various members of the legislature. Upon departure [redacted]

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[redacted] regarding a group called the "Finders". [redacted] inquired if the agents were aware of this case and suggested they make themselves knowledgeable of its details. [redacted] provided no further information. At that time I queried the name "Finders" and "The Finders" in the CPPU database and was able to locate a record under each title. These records revealed that an investigation had occurred at the RAC/Tallahassee and RAC/DC. A brief statement regarding the initiation of the case was included in one CPPU database entry. Neither entry mentioned child pornography. I queried the case number in [redacted] and determined that a case had been open and closed by Special Agent [redacted] on February 12, 1987. No



further information was located. This information was provided to SAC/Miami agents. It should be noted that [redacted] from the Customs Service. A copy of the CPPU records and the [redacted] record are attached as number 17.

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- Inquiries regarding this matter with [redacted] Division Director, Smuggling Investigations Division, revealed that the Finders incident was investigated by Special Agent [redacted] when he was assigned to what was then the RAC/DC.

- On September 3, 1993, I spoke with Special Agent [redacted] [redacted] who is currently assigned to Headquarters, Internal Affairs. [redacted] was the agent who participated with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) during the initial stages of their investigation of the "Finders". [redacted] provided two "Memo to File" reports, one dated "2/7/87" and the other "4/13/87". Copies of these memos are attached as number 18.

- [redacted] in initial establishment of the Child Pornography and Protection Unit at the request of then Commissioner Von Raab. Upon final staffing of the unit, [redacted] to the RAC/DC where he was assigned to work among other things, child pornography cases.

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- [redacted] advised that the reason the Tallahassee Police Department (TPD) had contacted Customs was due in part

[redacted]

[redacted]

- [redacted] stated that [redacted] contacted Special Agent [redacted] [redacted] RAC/DC, who was duty agent, because the TPD was requesting assistance in contacting Washington DC area law enforcement agencies that could help follow up on leads that they had developed. Subsequently, Customs was able to assist in this matter by arranging contact between the TPD and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), Washington DC.

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- SA [redacted] stated that he originally got involved with the MPD in this matter because there were suspicions that the children involved had been sexually exploited or abused and there was talk of taking them to Mexico. [redacted] said that when children were sexually

exploited, they were then usually involved with child pornography.

• [redacted] stated that he accompanied MPD in the search of one location while [redacted] accompanied MPD in the search of a second location. During the search of one location, no child pornography was located. At the second location,

[redacted]

• [redacted] was asked about what if any FBI involvement occurred during the execution of the warrants. [redacted] stated that Special Agent [redacted], Washington Field Office, had been assigned to the case. [redacted] said that

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[redacted]

• SA [redacted] advised that after the search warrants were executed, he tried several times to contact [redacted] (MPD) to attempt to review the documents he had reportedly seen. These attempts were unsuccessful until March 31, 1987, when [redacted] met with Sgt. John Stitcher, MPD, [redacted]. It should be noted that Sgt. Stitcher is now deceased.

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• On September 14, 1993, I spoke with [redacted] Office of Congressional Affairs to discuss this issue. This meeting was a result of Congressman Rose's questions to the Commissioner about this matter. At that time, all available information regarding Customs involvement on this issue was provided to [redacted]. A copy of the memorandum dated September 9, 1993, from Assistant Commissioner, Congressional Affairs, to the Assistant Commissioner, Enforcement, requesting this information is attached as number 19.

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• On September 14, 1993, I met with [redacted] National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). [redacted] advised me that he had been a MPD

[redacted]

that while the whole matter was bizarre, he did not notice any child pornography. [redacted] then provided me with some UPI news articles he had obtained from NEXIS. None of these articles mentioned [redacted] involvement. The articles are attached as number 20.

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- On September 16, 1993, Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Enforcement, Ed Logan requested me to develop more information pertaining to this matter.

- On September 16, 1993, I contacted [redacted] RAC/Tallahassee. [redacted] advised that he had been contacted by SAC/Miami agents for any information regarding the "Finders". [redacted] stated that he had requested the TPD to provide any information they might have on the incident that occurred in 1987. The officer he spoke with provided him with all police reports and a newspaper article that pertained to this subject. The

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[redacted]

requested that [redacted] provide me with the same information as well as any Customs case reports. He advised that after the initial opening report, the investigation revealed no Customs violations and the matter was closed. It should be noted that both the TPD police reports and the news article reported the incident as being bizarre. At no time did either report mention child pornography or any other violation that would fall within Customs jurisdiction nor did either report mention any [redacted]. The TPD report and news article are attached as number 21. The RAC/Tallahassee case report is attached as number 22.

- On September 16, 1993, I contacted ASAC [redacted] SAC/Baltimore office. [redacted] was the acting RAC/Reston on February 5, 1987. [redacted] stated that from what he could remember of the incident, he had cautioned [redacted] about getting involved in the matter, as he suspected that there were no Customs violations at that time. [redacted] stated

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[redacted]

[redacted]

- On September 16, 1993, I contacted [redacted] regarding additional information about this matter. He stated that

[redacted]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

On September 16, 1993, I contacted Special Agent [REDACTED] [REDACTED] FBI, Washington Field Office. [REDACTED] was the FBI case agent who handled matters regarding child pornography. [REDACTED] stated that the "Finders" was a very bizarre communal group who got their name based on the fact that they could "find" any type of information that was requested of them. [REDACTED] stated that MPD became very

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[REDACTED]

contained in various news stories. She said that during that period of time, the subject of child pornography and child sexual abuse was in the limelight of media attention because of the Meese report and the passing of the Child Protection Act. As a result, she stated that this case started a media frenzy. She also advised that it appeared to her that [REDACTED] and the MPD investigators were trying to

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] said that no evidence of child sexual exploitation, child pornography, or kidnapping was obtained.

In a memorandum dated March 9, 1987, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] of the "Finders" during her investigation. She said the group was a bizarre and abnormal cult that lived a different type of lifestyle. At no time did she uncover any evidence of any federal violations. She further stated that she had never heard about any State Department or [REDACTED] and was never instructed by [REDACTED] to discontinue her investigation.

- On September 17, 1993, I contacted Freedom of Information Offices in both Headquarters and the Southeast region. I inquired as to whether there were any records of FOIA requests from [REDACTED]. This met with negative results.
- On September 17, 1993, I contacted SAC/DC and requested that they provide me with the investigative case file regarding this matter. An examination of the case file revealed no mention of child pornography. A copy of this case file is attached as number 23.
- On September 17, 1993, I contacted [REDACTED] stated that from what he could remember, [REDACTED] tended to get himself involved in matters involving children that were outside the jurisdiction of Customs. As far as this matter is concerned, [REDACTED] did not show any indication of a Customs violation after his [REDACTED] investigation. [REDACTED] to discontinue the [REDACTED] investigation. [REDACTED]
- On September 17, 1993, I interviewed [REDACTED] Division Director, Smuggling Investigations Division. He stated that recalls the incident but does not remember any fax being sent to him, however, he did not deny receiving the fax. [REDACTED] stated that during that time, Customs Headquarters had no line authority over field offices, and therefore he was not in a position to dictate what action was appropriate. [REDACTED] stated that he does not recall any conversations between himself and [REDACTED] regarding this matter and certainly does not recall any discussion of [REDACTED]

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Heading # 2

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13 of the 30 presumed members of a religious sect arrested amid allegations linking the church to sexual activity involving children have been released from custody, a judge said Saturday.

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Heading # 3

0669252

Although many adults enjoy healthy friendships with teenagers, psychologists warned Friday that parents should be alert for signals of potential child sexual abuse.

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Heading # 4

0669201

The British branch of a religious cult under investigation in Argentina claims the organization is the target of persecution and says it is "deplorable" to link the group with child abuse, prostitution, begging and kidnapping.

Press (return) to continue...->

Heading # 5

0669200

Argentine investigators will wait until next week to review pornographic material seized and question sect members arrested in a raid in which 268 children were taken into custody, officials said Friday.

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Heading # 6

0669071

Police searched several residences Wednesday and took about 300 children away from members of the outlawed Children of God religious group, a cult accused of promoting indiscriminate sex.

Heading # 1

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^S/^Q: stop/start; ^T: Paging OFF; ^C/(esc): interrupt (^ = CTRL/CONTROL key)

15078

D : ADVICE ON DESIGN AND DECOR Easy on the Eyes - and Feet  
Newsday (ND) - Thursday September 2, 1993  
By: Beth Sherman  
Edition: NASSAU AND SUFFOLK Section: AT HOME Page: 83  
Word Count: 698

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Heading # 1

Searched: 09-13-1993 16:03

^S/^Q: stop/start; ^T: Paging OFF; ^C/(esc): interrupt (^ = CTRL/CONTROL key)

0645417

The fate of the largest sunken treasure in American history worth about \$1 billion is going to the Supreme Court, where an armada of lawyers will argue the legal virtues of finders-keepers.

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Heading # 31

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0342936

SECTION: General news  
CATEGORY TAG: children  
TELETYPE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) March 18, 1987  
TIME: 23:05ps CYCLE: pm  
PRIORITY: Deferred WORD COUNT: 0210

Authorities dropped child abuse charges against two members of the Finders commune who were arrested last month when police found them with six hungry and dirty young children in a city park.

Police Lt. Roy Dickey said prosecutors and defense attorneys agreed to the dismissal late Tuesday and Michael Hollwell and Doug Ammerman were promptly released from jail.

"They did not find that the original probable cause was invalid, but upon further investigation they found that the facts were different than they originally appeared to the officers that originally made the arrest," Dickey said.

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Hollwell and Ammerman were arrested Feb. 4 in a park when they could not explain where they and the six children with them were going or identify the youngsters' parents. The suspects and the children, age 2-6, were subsequently linked to the Finders communal organization of Washington D.C.

Four of the children were released to their parents, Dickey said, but I was unsure of the status of the two other children.

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ding # 32

0342535

SECTION: General news  
STORY TAG: children  
DATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) March 17, 1987  
TIME: 18:59ps CYCLE: am  
PRIORITY: Deferred WORD COUNT: 0203

Child abuse charges were dismissed Tuesday against two members of the Finders commune who were arrested last month after being found with six dirty and hungry young children in a city park.

Tallahassee Police Lt. Roy Dickey said prosecutors and defense attorneys agreed to the dismissal.

"They did not find that the original probable cause was invalid, but upon further investigation they found that the facts were different than they originally appeared to the officers that originally made the arrest," Dickey said.

Michael Hollwell and Doug Ammerman were arrested in a Tallahassee park Feb. 4 when they could not explain to police where they and the six dirty, Press (return) to continue...->

dirty children with them were going or identify the parents of the children.

The two men and the children, age 2-6, were linked to the Finders communal organization of Washington D.C.

Dickey said four of the children have been released to their parents, but he was unsure of the status of the two other children.

Press (return) to continue...->

Heading # 33

0341741

SECTION: General news  
STORY TAG: children  
DATELINE: MIAMI (UPI) March 12, 1987  
TIME: 06:42ps CYCLE: pm  
PRIORITY: Deferred WORD COUNT: 0275

Three of six children who belong to The Finders, a counterculture community based in Washington, D.C., have been ordered returned to their parents but the other three remain in temporary state supervision.

Shortly after Wednesday's order by Leon County Circuit Judge Victor Cawthon, the leader of The Finders said the group was disbanding.



Defense attorney Paul Walborsky called Cawthon's ruling a victory.

"I feel their right to be different has been vindicated," she said.

She said the other three children will most likely be returned to their parents after a hearing later this month. She said close state supervision of their upbringing probably also will be ordered.  
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The six children were discovered playing in a Tallahassee park Feb. 4. They were in the company of James M. Holwell, 23, and Douglas Ammerman, 27.

Holwell and Ammerman were arrested on misdemeanor charges of child abuse and are being held in the Leon County Jail pending their trial.

Hours after the court ruling, Robert G. Terrell, also known as Genghis K. Plato, said his secretive organization's experiment with "group work" had failed and is being dismantled after 17 years.

"This is farewell from The Finders. We're breaking up," Terrell said. "You won't be hearing from The Finders again until Hong Kong is being run by the Chinese and the Panama Canal is being managed by the Panamanians in other words, at least until the year 2000."

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Total charges thus far: \$61.00

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A judge Friday released five of six children found dirty and hungry in a park with two members of a communal organization to the temporary care of their mothers pending a custody hearing.

"The mothers have obtained separate places of residence in Leon County," said state attorney C.L. Fordham. "Each of the children will stay with their mothers."

The mother of the sixth child has returned to her Washington, D.C., home and 3-year-old Benjamin Franklin will remain in a Health and Rehabilitative Services foster care home until the permanent custody hearing March 6.

Leon County Judge Victor Cawthon ordered the release in a closed Press (return) to continue...->

hearing. Cawthon refused to allow reporters into the hearing because HRS officials said it could include discussion of possible sexual abuse of the children. State law prohibits releasing any information about a sexual case.

"I can assure you arrangements have been made for the protection of the children's interest," HRS spokeswoman Connie Ruggles said. She refused to elaborate.

Fordham also said he expected to resolve the fate of the two men, members of the Finders communal organization, arrested for child abuse while watching over the children by Monday. Fordham suggested that the two men Doug Ammerman and Michael Holwell might agree to plead guilty to lesser charges of child neglect.

Holwell and Ammerman were arrested in a Tallahassee park Feb. 4 when they could not explain to police the dirty appearance of the children, or say who or where the children's parents were.

Both men were charged with one count of child abuse. Holwell was also charged with one count of resisting arrest without violence.

On Nov. 14, five women claiming to be the mothers of the children Press (return) to continue...->

arrived in Tallahassee. Kristin Knauth, Judy Evans, Paula Arico, Carolyn Said and Patricia Livingston have said Ammerman and Holwell had taken the children on a Florida vacation with their knowledge and consent.

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Heading # 37

0337145

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: children

BY: McCLELLAND, MICHAEL

DATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) February 19, 1987

TIME: 07:05ps CYCLE: pm

PRIORITY: Deferred WORD COUNT: 0408

Bond was reduced for two members of the Finders communal organization facing child abuse charges, but the judge ordered the men to stay away from six children being held by the state pending a custody hearing.

Judge George Reynolds III reduced bond Wednesday from \$100,000 to \$20,000 each for Michael Holwell and Doug Ammerman and issued his stay-away order in the event the men are released from jail.

The men were arrested in a Tallahassee park Feb. 4 when they could not explain to police where they and the six dirty, hungry children with them were going, or who the children belonged to. The group has since been tied to the Washington D.C.-based Finders communal organization.

the parents of three of the children. Paula Arico and Pat Livingston said they let their children go on vacation with Ammerman and Howell and had "full faith" in them.

Reynolds also heard brief testimony from the parents of Ammerman and well. Ammerman's father, University of Florida agriculture professorrence Ammerman, said he did not see his son frequently, but that Doug Ammerman had come to his Gainesville home Jan. 20.

Holwell's father, New York high school math teacher James Holwell, said he had contact "on and off" with his son, his daughter-in-law Paula Arico, and their two children.

Holwell originally identified himself as Michael Houlihan, but was indicted as Holwell. Prosecutor C.L. Fordham said Holwell has refused to answer questions since his arrest and frequently goes "into a trance" when questioned.

Public defender Michael Minerva told Reynolds his clients are the center of a national controversy simply because they have an unusual lifestyle. But Fordham countered that the unusual case is far from settled.

"We've had a lot of roadblocks in this investigation," Fordham said. Press (return) to continue...->

"There are still so many unanswered questions. It may all turn out to be really innocuous, but at this point I'm just not comfortable saying this is all we're going to have. We don't feel we have enough of a picture to let them waltz out of here."

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Heading # 38

0336575

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: children

BY: McCLELLAND, MICHAEL

DATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) February 17, 1987

TIME: 21:59ps CYCLE: pm

PRIORITY: Deferred WORD COUNT: 0408

State officials told five women they will have to prove they are the mothers of six dirty, hungry children found in a park with two members of a communal organization before the issue of custody can be decided.

"It's not that we necessarily disbelieve these people are the mothers, but we need them to prove that," Connie Ruggles, a spokeswoman for the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, said Monday. "Anybody could just walk in here and claim to be the parents."

Ruggles said the women claiming to be the children's mothers met with HRS District Two chief administrator John Awad Monday morning and discussed : they needed to do to regain custody of the children.

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psychological evaluation.

Ruggles said Cawthon also could postpone a ruling while he seeks additional information.

In making his decision, she said, Cawthon will consider a report on conditions at the childrens' alleged home in Washington, D.C., to be prepared by HRS' sister agency in Washington.

The six children, dirty and hungry, were taken into state care Feb. 4 after their two adult companions were arrested in a Tallahassee park on child abuse charges. The men identified themselves as Douglas Edward Ammerman and James Michael Houlihan.

The group, and the five women, have been linked to the Finders, a Washington-based communal organization. Houlihan and Ammerman are currently being held in Leon County Jail on \$100,000 bond, awaiting trials on March 30 and March 31.

Ruggles did not have the names of the women involved. A copyright story Press (return) to continue...->

published by the Tallahassee Democrat newspaper on Sunday identified four of the women as Kristin Knauth, Judy Evans, Paula Arico and Carolyn Said.

Ruggles said Awad told the five women they would have to conclusively prove they are the mothers as the first step in gaining custody of the children. She said HRS would call in law enforcement officials to evaluate any proof presented by the women.

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Heading # 39

0336212

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: children

BY: McCLELLAND, MICHAEL

DATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) February 16, 1987

TIME: 14:03ps CYCLE: am

PRIORITY: Regular WORD COUNT: 0413

Five women claiming to be members of the Finders organization met with state officials Monday in an attempt to gain custody of six children found dirty and hungry in a park with two other members of the group.

The women met with John Awad, chief administrator of the Health and Rehabilitative Services District Two, and discussed what the women needed to do to regain custody of the children, HRS spokeswoman Connie Ruggles said.

Ruggles did not have the names of the women involved. A copyright y in Sunday's Tallahassee Democrat identified four of the women as tin Knauth, Judy Evans, Paula Arico and Carolyn Said.

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The six children were taken into state care on Feb. 4 after their two adult companions were arrested in a Tallahassee park on child abuse charges. The men who have identified themselves as Douglas Edward Ammerman and James Michael Houlihan were arrested because the children were dirty hungry and the men could not explain who the children belonged to.

The group has since been linked to the Finders, a Washington, D.C.-based communal organization. Houlihan and Ammerman were being held in Leon County Jail on \$100,000 bond. The children were in a foster care facility undergoing evaluation by HRS psychologists.

Awad told the five women they would have to prove conclusively that they are the mothers as the first step in gaining custody of the children, Ruggles said. She said HRS would call in law enforcement officials to evaluate any evidence presented by the women.

"It's not that we necessarily disbelieve these people are the mothers, but we need them to prove that," Ruggles said. "Anybody could just walk in here and claim to be the parents."

The women will have a chance to claim the children in a juvenile court Press (return) to continue...->

hearing scheduled for March 9, when Circuit Court Judge Victor Cawthon will hold an adjudication hearing on HRS request for custody of the children, Ruggles said. Cawthon could either give custody to the mothers, to HRS, or postpone a ruling while he seeks additional information, Ruggles said.

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Heading # 40

0336164

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: finders

BY: BRIENZA, JULIE

DATELINE: WASHINGTON (UPI) February 15, 1987

TIME: 12:44ps CYCLE: bc

PRIORITY: Advanced for weekend WORD COUNT: 0743

Members of a bizarre Washington commune, whose rituals were initially feared to be satanic, portray themselves as unconventional but legal, a definition that puzzled police may soon come to accept.

When two members of The Finders were arrested in a Tallahassee, Fla., park Feb. 4 and charged with child abuse, the unusual group was thrust into the national spotlight.

Police pronounced them satanic and their rural Virginia retreat was scrutinized for human remains.

The sensationalism unraveled, first with Florida police recanting their original suspicions that the men and children were involved in satanic Press (return) to continue...->

rituals. Then, District of Columbia and Virginia police said their

... group is so bizarre that it has many people perplexed and even scared. But one mother in the Finders describes herself and others as "perfectly good people."

"Granted, we have an alternative lifestyle," said the woman, who refused to give her name. "We're different from Mr. and Mrs. America next door. But we love our children and we're trying to lead a healthy, happy life. And to have this incredible barrage of attention and negativity toward us is really an awful feeling."

Tallahassee police announced early in the investigation of the men that they were believed to be part of a Devil worshipping cult based in the nation's capital that demands that members surrender their children.

"It is our belief these kids were not kidnapped but that their parents gave them away because one of the rites of passage into this satanic organization is that you have to give up your rights to your children," the police said.

But as more became known about the group, Tallahassee police backed off Press (return) to continue...->

on the alleged satanic link. Police also said it was unclear whether initial reports that least one of the children had been sexually abused could be substantiated.

Meanwhile, other law enforcement agencies came up with evidence of plenty of odd doings, but no illegality.

Finally, district Police Chief Maurice Turner, whose detectives had been investigating the group since December, said the commune members pose "a threat to themselves more than anything else."

The children, ages 2 to 7 and giving such names as Honey Bee, John Paul Pope and Benjamin Franklin, have remained in foster homes since the men were arrested. The men still face child abuse charges and the parents a custody battle over the children.

They are waiting out what has evolved into a bizarre fairytale whose chapters include white-robed men at a goat-slaying ceremony in Virginia with youngsters holding goat fetuses.

A Finders spokesman, who met with reporters while wearing a Ronald Reagan mask over the back of his head, said the investigation, from the outset, was a mixup. Press (return) to continue...->

"Reasonable people ... will realize a mistake has been made and it was blown way out of proportion and that it's gone much too far," said Robert Terrell.

Asked how he would characterize the Finders, Terrell said, "We are on the cutting edge of the wit and humor movement."

Reports of satanism surfaced when police seized pictures taken of a ceremony held on what appeared to be the Etlan, Va., farm. A goat's head, skins and a scrapbook titled "The Execution of Henrietta and Igor" were confiscated.

Some pictures showed three men wearing white robes dismembering two

Terrell, saying the ceremony was held for the children, said it was meant to be an educational experience so they could see the insides of the goats. Robes were worn to make an impression on the youngsters, he said, to bring home the seriousness of killing an animal that was slaughtered for its meat.

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Heading # 41

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0335928

SECTION: Washington news

STORY TAG: finders

BY: BRIENZA, JULIE

DATELINE: WASHINGTON (UPI) February 14, 1987

TIME: 09:40ps CYCLE: am

PRIORITY: Regular WORD COUNT: 0705

Members of a bizarre Washington commune, with rituals initially feared to be satanic, portray themselves as unconventional but legal, a definition that puzzled police may soon come to accept.

Two men, who said they were members of The Finders, were arrested in a Tallahassee, Fla., park Feb. 4 with six children. The men were charged with child abuse and police pronounced the group satanic. The group's rural Virginia retreat was scrutinized for human remains.

The sensationalism unraveled, first with Florida police recanting their original suspicions that the men and children were involved in satanic rituals. Then, District of Columbia and Virginia police said their Press (return) to continue...->

investigations would not yield any criminal charges.

Still, the group seems bizarre. But one mother in The Finders describes herself and others as "perfectly good people."

"Granted, we have an alternative lifestyle," said the woman, who refused to give her name. "We're different from Mr. and Mrs. America next door. But we love our children and we're trying to lead a healthy, happy life. And to have this incredible barrage of attention and negativity toward us is really an awful feeling."

Tallahassee police announced early in the investigation that they believed the arrested men to be part of a devil-worshipping cult based in the nation's capital that demands that members surrender their children.

"It is our belief these kids were not kidnapped but that their parents gave them away because one of the rites of passage into this satanic organization is that you have to give up your rights to your children," the police said.

But as more became known about the group, Tallahassee police backed off that statement. Police also said it was unclear whether initial reports that least one of the children had been sexually abused could be substantiated.



plenty of odd doings, but no illegality.

Finally, District Police Chief Maurice Turner, whose detectives had been investigating the group since December, said the commune members pose "a threat to themselves more than anything else."

The children, ages 2 to 7 and given such names as Honey Bee, John Paul Pope and Benjamin Franklin, have been in foster homes since the men were arrested. The men still face child abuse charges and the parents a custody battle.

A Finders spokesman, Robert Terrell, who met with reporters while wearing a Ronald Reagan mask over the back of his head, said the police investigation, from the outset, was a mixup.

"Reasonable people ... will realize a mistake has been made and it was blown way out of proportion and that it's gone much too far," said Terrell.

Asked how he would characterize the Finders, he said, "We are on the cutting edge of the wit and humor movement."

Reports of satanism surfaced when police seized pictures taken of a ceremony held on what appeared to be the Etlan, Va., farm. A goat's head, Press (return) to continue...->

goatskins and a scrapbook titled "The Execution of Henrietta and Igor" were also confiscated.

Some pictures showed three men wearing white robes dismembering two goats. Another picture showed at least one child showing a goat fetus to someone behind a hand-held camera.

Terrell, saying the ceremony was held for the children, said it was meant to be an educational experience so they could see the insides of the goats. Robes were worn to make an impression on the youngsters, he said, to bring home the seriousness of killing an animal that was slaughtered for its meat.

Former members of the group said "game-playing" was the mainstay of their philosophy. They say it was often difficult to determine if group members were serious or if they were acting out a fantasy.

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Heading # 42

0335544

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: children

DATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) February 12, 1987

TIME: 05:07ps CYCLE: pm

PRIORITY: Deferred WORD COUNT: 0401

BI agents have contacted the parents of six children found in a park in two men linked to the mysterious Finders organization, but interviews revealed no illegal activity by the parents, authorities said.

"We have uncovered nothing that would point to an illegal activity" by the parents, Sheppard said, but he declined to discuss the interviews.

Tallahassee police ended daily briefings on the arrest last week of two who were found in a city park with six young children described by police as filthy and covered with insect bites and scratches.  
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The men, who gave their names as Doug Ammerman and Michael Houlihan, were linked to the Finders, a Washington-based group police originally characterized as a satanic cult. Police subsequently backed off that description and now refer to the Finders simply as an organization.

Parents of the children being held in Florida talked publicly in Washington about the ordeal and their lifestyle on Wednesday.

"We are perfectly good people," said one mother, who appeared on CBS but refused to give her name. "Granted, we have an alternative lifestyle. We're different from Mr. and Mrs. America next door. But we love our children and we're trying to lead a healthy, happy life. And to have this incredible barrage of attention and negativity toward us is really an awful feeling.

Ammerman and Houlihan were arraigned Wednesday on one count each of misdemeanor child abuse charges. Houlihan also was arraigned on a single count of resisting arrest without violence.

Leon County Judge George Reynolds III refused to reduce the \$100,000 bond set for the two men, but did not immediately set a trial date.

The children were turned over to the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services and are being interviewed by a child psychiatrist.  
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Heading # 43

0335280

SECTION: General news  
STORY TAG: children  
BY: McCLELLAND, MICHAEL  
DATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) February 11, 1987  
TIME: 07:58ps CYCLE: pm  
PRIORITY: Regular WORD COUNT: 0550

Six children taken from followers of the Finders group remained in state custody today and two men charged with abusing them entered pleas of innocent at their arraignment.

The two men, who have given their names as Doug Ammerman and Michael Houlihan, were arrested on Feb. 4 after they were spotted in a city park with six children described by arresting officers as filthy and covered with insect bites and scratches.

They have since been tied to the Washington, D.C.-based Finders organization.

Both men appeared in court today and were ordered held on a single Press (return) to continue...->

count of child abuse not the six counts police earlier said had been filed. Neither man would speak with reporters.

State authorities indicated they were unsure the children had been abused at all.

Dr. Nauman Greenberg of Chicago, hired by the state Health and Rehabilitative Services Department, spent four hours with the children Tuesday.

Greenberg said the children seemed troubled but that he was not immediately sure whether the problem was caused by the children's upbringing or by their current circumstances.

The children, taken a week ago, will remain in state custody at least until Feb. 26, when state officials will go before a judge to recommend what should be done with the youngsters.

"Some of their problems were the kind you might see in children who had been institutionalized," Greenberg said. "The real casual contact they would have with adults reminded me of young children who had been on a psychiatric ward for a long, long time."

The children seemed physically healthy but showed signs of being Press (return) to continue...->

The state took custody of the children last Wednesday when police arrested Ammerman and Houlihan watching over the children youngsters in a city park.

The men were being held in lieu of \$100,000 bond.

Health officials could not confirm statements made by Tallahassee police that two of the children were sexually abused.

John Award, the department administrator, said a doctor's report found a possibility of sexual abuse but no conclusive evidence.

"Our information does not substantiate that or unsubstantiate that," Award said. "We are still in the process of looking at that, but we have come to no definitive conclusions."

In a related development, police in Etlan, Va., said they found no evidence of criminal activity in a search of a farm owned by Finders leader Marion Pettie and a house owned by his apparent sons, George and David Pettie.

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Virginia police spokesman Charles Vaughan said officers seized "a computer, software, a couple of goatskins, a goat head and some papers and various documents, writing and cards."

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Heading # 44

0335123

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: children

BY: McCLELLAND, MICHAEL

DATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) February 11, 1987

TIME: 12:30ps CYCLE: am

PRIORITY: Regular WORD COUNT: 0425

The \$100,000 bond for two Finders group members facing misdemeanor child abuse charges is justified by the mystery surrounding the case and six children found with the men, the prosecutor said Wednesday.

The men, who have given their names as Doug Ammerman and Michael Houlihan, were arraigned on one count each of child abuse. Houlihan also was arraigned for a single misdemeanor count of resisting arrest without violence.

Public defender Michael Minerva asked Leon County Judge George Reynolds III to reduce their bond, but Reynolds said a special hearing is required on that issue.

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"It may be an unusually high bond, but it's an unusual case," said state attorney C.L. Fordham. "The bond is based more on the questions than

lives of six children," the prosecutor said.

Reynolds' entered pleas of innocent for both men and said they would receive a jury trial. The men will remain in the Leon County Jail pending a trial. No court date was set.

Houlihan and Ammerman were arrested Feb. 4 after they were spotted in a city park with six children described by police as filthy and covered with insect bites and scratches. The men have since been linked to the Finders, a Washington, D.C., group police originally called a satanic cult. Police later backed off that description and now refer to the Finders simply as an organization.

Houlihan has given several names to investigators and he was arraigned as "Michael Holwell."

Houlihan appeared before Reynolds dressed in jail-issue blue pants and shirt, white socks, sandals and leg shackles. He seemed nervous, often Press (return) to continue...->

hesitating before answering questions and speaking in clipped, strained sentences.

Scott Hunt, Tallahassee police spokesman, said Tuesday both men had been charged with six counts of child abuse, but Fordham said papers sent by police listed only the single child abuse charge, plus the resisting charge against Houlihan.

Fordham said each charge is for the abuse of all six children, rather than a single count for abuse of a specific child. The men face up to one year in jail and up to a \$1,000 fine on each count.

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Heading # 45

0334860

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: children

February 10, 1987

TIME: 16:03ps CYCLE: am

PRIORITY: Deferred WORD COUNT: 0465

Health and Rehabilitative Services district administrator John Awad said a physicians report found "a possibility" of sexual abuse, but no conclusive evidence.

"Our indications does not substantiate that or unsubstantiate that," Awad said. "We have come to no definitive conclusions."

Police in ETLAN, Va., meanwhile, dug a 30-foot trench on a farm owned by Finders leader Marion Pettie looking for what an unidentified source imed were "buried remains."

Virginia State Police spokesman Charles Vaughan said no remains human or animal were found. The unidentified source told police there were two

Tallahassee police had said last week that two or more of the children taken into state custody had been sexually abused.

HRS took custody of the children last Wednesday after police arrested two Finders watching over six filthy children in a Tallahassee city park. The men, who identified themselves as Michael Houlihan and Doug Ammerman, were charged with six counts of child abuse and were being held in lieu of \$100,000 bond.

Meanwhile, the HRS, under the supervision of Chicago child psychiatrist Nauman Greenberg, has begun interviewing the six youngsters. Greenberg said his preliminary interviews suggested the children had a living arrangement that was "probably not very healthy."

"Some of their problems were the kind you might see in children who had been institutionalized," Greenberg said. "The real casual contact they would have with adults reminded me of young children who had been on a pediatric ward for a long long time."

The children are being kept at a secret location because of phone threats.

Police in Washington raided two buildings belonging to the Finders last Thursday and found numerous pictures, including some of nude children and Press (return) to continue...->

children taking part in animal sacrifices.

Greenberg said he had not discussed animal sacrifice or sexual abuse in his initial talks with the children because he did not want to traumatize them immediately by forcing them to deal with possibly painful subjects.

The children will remain in HRS care until at least Feb. 26, when the case must go before a circuit judge to recommend what should be done with them. That recommendation could include more time in state care.

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Heading # 46

0334776

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: children

DATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) February 09, 1987

TIME: 02:42ps CYCLE: pm

PRIORITY: Deferred WORD COUNT: 0490

There is evidence of sexual abuse involving more than one of the six children found hungry and dirty in a park last week with two apparent members of a mysterious cult, police said.

"We now know more than one child was abused," police spokesman Scott Hunt said Sunday. "How many we are not going to say, in what manner we are going to say and how recently we are not going to say."

The children, aged 2 to 6, are in the custody of state health officials and under police guard following the arrest last Wednesday of the two men,

... identified himself as R. Gardner Terrell said the children were not  
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mistreated and received adequate care and were taken "on a vacation-camping  
trip to the warmer climate of Florida with the full applause and approval  
the children's mothers."

The letter claimed the men and the children went to Berea, Ky., to help  
in construction of "New Hope," a retirement community organized by Rev. Jim  
Wyker, but the project was not ready for their help.

Wyker and Willis B. Hunting told The Miami Herald the men and children  
arrived at the community last month in a van.

"The kids had lots of clothes and lots of food and they were wonderful,  
healthy and vigorous," Wyker told the newspaper. "They weren't dominated.  
They weren't reticent, but they weren't aggressive, either."

Hunting, who along with his wife Lucile runs a Montessori school near  
Wyker's property, said that when he asked the men about the children's  
parents, they told him the parents were members of "The Finders" cult.

Authorities say "The Finders" is a mysterious cult based in the  
Washington area that may have ties to satanism. Washington police have  
found pictures of the children in ceremonies involving the bloodletting of  
animals.

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The authenticity of the letter and its claims could not be confirmed  
and Washington police said they had not yet formally received a copy.

Two police detectives from Washington arrived in Tallahassee Sunday to  
question the children and possibly talk to the suspects, who are charged  
with aggravated child abuse and resisting arrest without violence. They are  
being held in lieu of \$100,000 bond each.

The children identified in the letter as Mary Arico, John Paul Arico,  
Max Berns, Ben Knauth, Honeybee Evans and Bebe Said are believed to be the  
sons and daughters of cult members and not kidnap victims, authorities  
said.

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Heading # 47

0334622

SECTION: General news  
STORY TAG: children  
BY: McCLELLAND, MICHAEL  
DATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) February 09, 1987  
TIME: 14:28ps CYCLE: am  
PRIORITY: Deferred WORD COUNT: 0702

Publicity surrounding six children taken from members of the Finders cult  
has brought a flood of questions from anxious parents of missing children,  
a police spokesman said Monday.

made nationwide headlines Thursday.

"What really breaks your heart is the call you get from the sincere mother from somewhere out in the Midwest saying, 'My daughter was kidnapped two years ago, I'm sure the picture I saw was her, I need to come down here, I want my daughter back,'" Hunt said. "You try not to build up any false hope in them, so that when we find out the identities of the children, if it's not her daughter, then this lady isn't suffering again."

Hunt said authorities had "tentative" identifications of the children, but refused to release those names until they are confirmed. He said he believes the children eventually will be shown to be children of Finders members, and not runaways or kidnap victims.

The children have been in state care since Wednesday, when police arrested their two adult companions for child abuse after they were spotted watching over six filthy children in a city park. State officials said they determined at least two of the children had been sexually abused.

The men, who identified themselves as Michael Houlihan and Doug Ammerman, have since been linked to the Finders, a Washington D.C.-based cult. They are being held in the Leon County jail in lieu of \$100,000 bond.

Washington police, acting on information supplied by Tallahassee officers, raided two buildings belonging to Finders' members in the District of Columbia. They found numerous pictures in those raids, including pictures of nude children and children taking part in animal sacrifice.

Hunt said his office received about 450 calls from reporters between Thursday and Sunday and took about 50 more by noon Monday. Calls about the mess (return) to continue...->

children multiplied after pictures of the youngsters, supplied by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, were published in newspapers and televised.

Hunt said authorities released the pictures in hopes of finding relatives, even though it meant public exposure of sexually abused children. He noted authorities have not said which of the children had been sexually abused, and added the pictures resulted in many new leads.

Hunt said authorities also are investigating a possible Finders presence in Gainesville, Fla., but could offer no specifics.

"We believe there was a Gainesville connection, either they've traveled to there, they've stayed there or were planning to go, exactly what the connection was we don't know," Hunt said.

Hunt said two Washington police investigators were still in Tallahassee, but had not yet spoken to the children. He said Tallahassee police would concentrate on determining the children's identity, including checking all calls from potential relatives.

Hunt said the FBI would handle the investigation of a memo delivered during the weekend to Washington police from Robert Gardner Terrell, the Finders member who owns the two buildings raided by police. In the memo,

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Terrell told CBS affiliate WUSA-TV the group never abused children.

"We never touch a child except with love," Terrell said. "We're allowing the children to grow up in touch with their own intuition, to learn at their own speed, to learn how to walk and to talk when they naturally feel that it's time to learn to walk and talk and read."

Terrell said the children's parents had not come to claim them for fear they would be arrested.

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Heading # 48

0334524

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: children

February 08, 1987

TIME: 14:01ps CYCLE: am

PRIORITY: Regular WORD COUNT: 0484

Meanwhile, a man claiming to be a member of the group, in a letter sent to news organizations in Washington, defended the two men in police custody in Florida and said the children had been properly treated.

In Tallahassee, police spokesman Scott Hunt said, "We now know more than one child was abused. How many we are not going to say, in what manner we are not going to say and how recently we are not going to say."

Two police detectives from Washington arrived in Tallahassee Sunday to question the children and possibly the suspects, who are charged with aggravated child abuse and resisting arrest without violence and being held in lieu of \$100,000 bond each.

The two men, who identified themselves as Michael Houlihan, 23, and Douglas Ammerman, 27, were arrested Wednesday after they were seen in a Tallahassee park with the six filthy, poorly dressed children.

Authorities said the men are members of "The Finders," a mysterious cult based in the Washington area that may have ties to satanism. Washington police have found pictures of the children in ceremonies involving the bloodletting of animals.

The letter sent to news organizations, from a man who identified himself as R. Gardner Terrell, said the children traveled with their mothers' approval from Washington to Berea, Ky., in January, and then to Florida.

The letter said the children were not mistreated and received adequate care, and were taken "on a vacation-camping trip to the warmer climate of Florida with the full applause and approval of the children's mothers."

The document claimed the men and the children went to Berea to help in

Wyker, reached by telephone in Berea, confirmed that the men and the children visited him in January and said the youngsters were in "excellent" shape. (return) to continue...->

shape. But Wyker, who said he never practiced as a minister, refused to give details about himself or his relationship with the cult members.

The authenticity of the letter and its claims could not be confirmed and Washington police said they had not yet formally received a copy.

The children identified in the letter as Mary Arico, John Paul Arico, Max Berns, Ben Knauth, Honeybee Evans and Bebe Said are believed to be the sons and daughters of cult members and not kidnap victims, authorities said.

Press (return) to continue...->

Heading # 49

0334457

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: children

BY: McCLELLAND, MICHAEL

DATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) February 07, 1987

TIME: 21:18ps CYCLE: pm

PRIORITY: Regular WORD COUNT: 0584

Police said six filthy and confused young children taken from two men charged with child abuse have been given away by their parents as part of a satanic cult ritual.

Authorities in Tallahassee and Washington were trying today to learn the identities of the six children, locate their parents and learn more about an unidentified "satanic cult" apparently based in Washington.

Meanwhile, two men who identified themselves as Michael Houlihan and Doug Ammerman names police believe are phony were being held in lieu of \$100,000 bond on child abuse charges.

The men were arrested in a city park Wednesday after someone called Press (return) to continue...->

Police about two well-dressed men in a blue van watching over six "filthy" children.

"It is our belief these kids were not kidnapped, but that their parents gave them away because one of the rites of passage into this satanic organization is that you have to give up your rights to your children, and that the leaders of this organization can do what they want to with your children," police spokesman Scott Hunt said Friday.

"I believe what you're going to find when this all shakes down is that kids' parents belong to this organization."

"Until we can figure out where everything is, we can't say a whole lot," said Walt Ferguson, a police spokesman in Washington.

...warehouse linked to the group include those of children engaged in what appeared to be "cult rituals."

The newspaper said the group was known as "The Finders" and was made up of about 40 people who lived in the District of Columbia and a farm in al Virginia, the remains of a popular 1960s hippie refuge that evolved ss (return) to continue...->

into a satanist society.

Hunt said a 6-year-old girl in the group showed signs of sexual abuse.

The children four boys and two girls raning in age from 2 to 6 were put in state custody.

Merrill Moody of the state health department said the youngsters were "confused," but were doing well and will remain in state care until relatives can found who are able to provide "a safe and healthy home."

Hunt said the children, who had not bathed in days and were covered with scratches and insect bites, told police they had not eaten in 24 hours. He said they had "bizarre" names like "Benjamin Franklin," "Honey Bee" and "B.B."

Police also believe the two men gave false names. A check of the Virginia license plate on their van showed it belonged to a man matching Houlihan's description, but with a different name, Hunt said.

The men initially told police they were taking the youths to Mexico to begin a school for "brilliant" children. When they could not explain the children's condition or name their parents, Hunt said, the men refused to ss (return) to continue...->

answer further questions.

The children told police they had not seen their mothers since before Christmas. One girl said the men fed them mostly fruit and all of them had been sleeping in the van or in a tent.

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Heading # 50

0334358

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: children-finders

DATELINE: WASHINGTON (UPI) February 07, 1987

TIME: 22:17ps CYCLE: am

PRIORITY: Regular WORD COUNT: 0456

An investigation into the alleged abuse of six children found with two men in a Tallahassee, Fla. park appears to be leading authorities toward a "fanatic organization" based in and around the nation's capital.

The men, identifying themselves as Michael Houlihan and Doug Ammerman, were arrested Wednesday in a city park after an anonymous caller told

The children are suspected of being victims of a cult that requires members to give away their children, police spokesman Scott Hunt said.

"It is our belief these kids were not kidnapped but that their parents gave them away because one of the rites of passage into this satanic cult (return) to continue...->

organization is that you have to give up your rights to your children, and that the leaders of this organization can do what they want to with your children," Hunt said.

District of Columbia police, based on information found in the van, have searched a house on W Street, NW, and a warehouse on Fourth Street, NE., linked to a group called "the Finders," a 1960s-style commune described in a court document as a "cult" that allegedly conducted "brainwashing" and used children "in rituals."

A Washington Post report Saturday quotes police sources as saying some of the items seized from the two district locations showed pictures of children engaged in what appeared to be "cult rituals."

U.S. Customs Service officials, called in to aid in the investigation, said the material seized includes photos showing children involved in bloodletting ceremonies of animals and one photograph of a child in chains.

Customs officials said they were investigating whether a child pornography operation was being conducted.

The Finders are the remains of a popular 1960s hippie refuge that evolved into a satanist group dedicated to communalism and to studying the Press (return) to continue...->

...sure, according to court documents.

The leader of the group is Marion Pettie, a retired military man, according to U.S. District Court documents in Washington.

In addition to the Washington locations, the group is also linked to a farm in Etlan, Va.

FBI agents and Virginia State police Friday night were expected to get search warrants for two cabins on the farm allegedly used by the group to forcibly separate children from their parents who were members of the cult.

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Heading # 51

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0334357

SECTION: General news

STORY TAG: children

Y: McCLELLAND, MICHAEL

ATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (UPI) February 07, 1987

TIME: 13:47ps CYCLE: am

PRIORITY: Urgent WORD COUNT: 0521

to another location and place them under guard.

A half dozen threats were received Thursday evening at the police department and the foster home where two of the children were being kept, police spokesman Scott Hunt said. The location of that foster home had been ret and Hunt said he did not know how the caller got the phone number.

At the request of the FBI, Hunt refused to elaborate on the calls. But he said the calls dealt with the children's safety.

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Hunt also refused to discuss the measures taken to protect the children. He said tapes of the calls to the police station were being evaluated, and that police did not know if the calls came from a "local crackpot" or were tied to "The Finders."

"You never underestimate the power of somebody who wants to do damage to young children," Hunt said. "That we have had threats has put us on alert."

The six children, ages 2 to 6, are in the custody of state health officials following the arrest of their two adult companions Wednesday. State health officials, police and the FBI are all attempting to determine the children's real names and relatives.

The two men, who identified themselves as Michael Houlihan and Douglas Ammerman, were arrested after they were seen in a park with the six filthy, poorly dressed children. Both are being held on \$100,000 bond.

Police said one of the children, a 6-year-old girl, had been sexually sed. The two men and the youngsters have been linked to "The Finders," a mysterious cult in Washington D.C. Police suspect the children were turned over to the cult as part of their parents' initiation.

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Virginia State Police and Madison County, Va., sheriff's officers served five search warrants early Saturday in the area of the Pettie Farm, a 90-acre property near the Shenandoah National Park. Owner Marion Pettie is reported to be the founder of "The Finders."

Evidence was seized and would be analyzed, but, "no obvious new evidence of criminal activity was found," Virginia State Police Lt. J.P. Henries said.

The Washington Post reported a police search of a Washington warehouse linked to the group turned up large numbers of photographs, slides, and photographic contact sheets. Some of the photos, the Post reported, were of children, some of them nude.

The Post cited police sources who said some of the pictures were of children engaged in what appeared to be "cult rituals." U.S. Customs officials said the confiscated material included pictures of children involved in bloodletting ceremonies of animals and there was one photograph of a child in chains.

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# Officials Weigh Future of Finders' Children

## *Two Members Plead Not Guilty to Misdemeanor Neglect Charges in Florida*

By Marc Fisher and Victoria Churchillville  
Washington Post Staff Writers

As police wind down their investigations of the Washington-based Finders commune, the process begins to determine the future of the six children found unkempt and hungry in a van with two Finders members in Florida last week—a process that experts said yesterday is likely to be long and complex.

The children, who range in age from 2 to 7, will remain in emergency shelters until a March 9 hearing at which child advocates will argue that the youngsters should be declared dependents of the state, said Connie Ruggles, spokeswoman for the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services in Tallahassee.

While Florida law requires that the state try to reunite families, the state's neglect law may prevent that. And cases in other states provide precedent for dramatic state intervention in child-rearing by religious or communal groups.

The two Finders members found with the children, Douglas Ammerman, 27, and Michael Holwell, 23, pleaded not guilty yesterday to a misdemeanor charge of child neglect in Tallahassee.

Prosecutor C.L. Fordham told Leon County Judge George Reynolds III that the

\$100,000 bond set for each of the two Finders members is justified by the mystery surrounding the case. Reynolds appointed a public defender to represent the men, who previously said they had a private attorney. Ammerman and Holwell have refused to answer questions.

The Finders, a secretive group of about 20 people who lived communally, generally refuse to talk about the group to outsiders. Their leader, Marion Pettie, advocates a philosophy of "falling limp," both physically and mentally, in the face of opposition. During his arrest last week, Holwell pretended to faint and had to be carried to a police car, police said.

The Finders' failure to seek custody of the children has puzzled Florida authorities. While spokesmen for the group in Washington say the mothers want their children back, no one from the Finders has contacted state officials, Ruggles said.

"We don't even know who the parents are," she said.

But a spokeswoman for the group said last night that the five mothers were already on their way to Tallahassee to reclaim their children.

"They waited to finish the FBI interviews first before they went to Tallahassee," said Diane Sherwood, who said the women were

in San Francisco Feb. 4 when the men were arrested.

"The mothers wanted to go right to Tallahassee, their first instinct was to go right for the children . . . [but] the FBI was asking them to come to Washington, so it seemed like the thing to do. We thought there'd be papers here, a subpoena or something. We didn't really know where to go first."

Sherwood said the mothers were not aware of the arrests until two days later. A Finders spokesman said previously that communication among group members had been fragmented by police seizures here of sophisticated computer hookups and long-distance telephone numbers.

A Finders member reached at the group's warehouse yesterday said the "father of record" of each child is not necessarily that child's biological father.

"We don't consider fatherhood to be a healthy concept," said the man, who spoke on condition that he not be named. "We're all fathers of all the kids and any man who has a good relationship with the child is the father."

Sherwood ridiculed the accusations of abuse. "A hundred thousand dollars bond for a misdemeanor? What were the charges—dirty faces and mismatched clothes? . . . If

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There was a mistake in judgment, it was a mistake in judgment; it's not child abuse."

Nevertheless, Sherwood said, the mothers felt that if they had been left in charge of the children, there would have been no allegations of abuse.

Despite the Finders' unorthodox child-rearing philosophy, Ruggles said "an alternative life style is not automatically neglect. But if the parents come forward and object to state custody, we would investigate the home situation."

Under Florida's neglect law, children can be taken by the state if the parents deprive children—or "allow children to be deprived"—of food, clothing, shelter or medical treatment. The Finders say children should be weaned from their mothers and reared by the group with little adult supervision.

Similar cases have pitted governments against groups with unusual beliefs. In 1984, police and welfare authorities in Vermont raided the Kingdom Community Church and founded up 112 children after an investigation found that children were sometimes whipped with branches or rods for crying, day-dreaming or fibbing. Criminal abuse charges were eventually dropped and prosecutors are now seeking a ruling on whether church members must send their children to school, said Vermont Attorney General Jeff Amestoy.

In another case, involving a radical New York commune called the Fourth Wall Repertory Company, member Marice Pappo said commune leaders took her infant from her because she and the child had grown too attached. Harold Mayer-son, Pappo's lawyer in a custody suit, said the group denied children their right to bond with parents. But Martin Stolar, attorney for Pappo's husband, said the state "has to be very careful about what it determines is a fit environment."

Some psychiatrists argue for state protection of children living in cults and cult-like settings. David Halperin, a psychiatry professor at Mount Sinai Medical School in New York City, said members of some such groups often profess to take care of their children, but in fact ignore them.

"Within these groups, the parents tend to focus on their own state of being and children tend to be seen as an impediment," he said. "A group cannot relate to a child the same way a parent can relate to a child."

This is not the first time the Finders' child rearing has attracted government attention. A grandmother of one of the children now in Florida said her grandson and other Finders' children have been sheltered by the District twice in recent years. In October 1985, D.C. police picked up two children they found wandering "cold and hungry" near the group's warehouse, the grandmother said. A D.C. government source confirmed that the children were held "for several days" before being released.

One year earlier, District police detained a Finders member who refused to leave the house where she lived with her mother, the grandmother said. That woman's child also was placed in a city shelter temporarily.

Finders spokesman Robert Gardner Terrell confirmed both incidents, explaining that Finders children are allowed to roam freely in the country but are supervised in the city.

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Staff writer Ed Bruske contributed to this report.

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# No evidence found of wrongdoing by 'Finders' group

By Matt Neufeld  
and Linda Miller Terman  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Police in Virginia and the District said yesterday they have uncovered no evidence of satanic practices, cult rituals, child pornography or any other criminal wrongdoing associated with the communal group known as the Finders.

The statements by police appear to clear the Finders of several allegations that were raised against the group in a Metropolitan Police affidavit filed Thursday in support of two search warrants.

The warrants were served and two properties owned by the Finders in the District were searched Thursday. Papers, passports, computers, photographs, computer software, tapes, film and a telephone-answering machine belonging to the group were seized by police.

The seizures followed the arrest Wednesday in Tallahassee, Fla., of two male members of the group on charges of felony child abuse. The six children, ranging in age from 2 to 7 years old, were reportedly dirty and hungry when they were found by Florida police. They now are in foster care.

"At this point, the Metropolitan Police Department has not found any materials among the seized documents or records that would initially corroborate allegations made by an informant that the organization is a cult and that its activities involve satanic rituals," said police Chief Maurice T. Turner Jr. at an afternoon press conference.

A Virginia State Police spokesman said yesterday that officers had found no evidence of any criminal activity among the materials seized at rural Madison County properties owned by Finders member G. Marion Pettie.

"My information at this point is that there isn't anything [criminal]," Charles Vaughan, a State Police spokesman, said yesterday. Police were continuing to sift through the material taken from the rural properties where Finders members are known to have lived, he said.

Meanwhile, Tallahassee Police spokesman Scott Hunt said yesterday that "more than one" of the Finders children taken into custody last week "showed evidence of sexual abuse," but that police had no evidence linking the alleged sexual abuse to the men in custody. Mr. Hunt declined to elaborate.

The two men, identified as Douglas Ammerman, 27, and James Michael Houlihan, 23, are being held in jail in lieu of posting \$100,000 bonds each on the child abuse charges. No hearing dates have been set for either man, he said.

Tallahassee police had not confirmed the identities of the children or any of the claims made by hundreds of people who have called in the past few days saying they were related to the children, Mr. Hunt said.

FBI spokeswoman Sue Schnitzer said yesterday the bureau is continuing to investigate whether any federal crimes were committed in relation to the six children taken into custody in Florida, but refused to discuss further details of the probe.

Ms. Schnitzer did say the FBI, like Florida police, had received hundreds of calls on Friday from people claiming to be relatives of the children. The FBI had not determined whether anyone was in fact related to them, she said.

Chief Turner said police began surveillance of two Finders' residences — a warehouse in the 1300 block of Fourth Street NE and an apartment building in the 3900 block of W Street NW — in December after receiving a tip from an anonymous source that satanic rituals were being practiced by group members and children were being abused.

He defended the police investigation and the subsequent seizures of property owned by the Finders, saying it was justified by the seriousness of the allegations made against the group.

"We were investigating to find if

Cont

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there was child abuse or sexual abuse," Chief Turner said. "We will continue to do that until we assure ourselves that is not the case."

Metropolitan Police Inspector David Faison, head of the department's intelligence division, said seized pictures that showed children watching the slaughtering of animals on a Madison County, Va., farm were not part of a satanic ritual or pornography. He also said police have found no pictures in the Finders' residences that would be considered pornographic.

David Hoover, a spokesman for the U.S. Customs Service, said yesterday his agency was called into the investigation of the Finders by Metropolitan Police because it was suspected that some of the material confiscated during Thursday's raids might be pornographic. Customs agents have expertise in child pornography investigations, Mr. Hoover said.

Mr. Hoover said he understood that Metropolitan Police had not finished analyzing the material seized in last week's raids. Customs agents could not complete their own probe until the District police did, Mr. Hoover said.

"There has been an awful lot of material seized. It's going to take a number of days to sift through this. I think it would be premature to think we're [Customs] out of it [the investigation]," Mr. Hoover said.

"The lifestyle of the so-called Finders organization may differ from the societal norm, but so far the Metropolitan Police Department has not uncovered any evidence of criminal wrongdoing by members of the group," Chief Turner said. "However, we are still involved in an extensive and detailed review process of the documents and records seized."

Chief Turner said he does not consider the Finders a threat to society or a dangerous group. He said three or four members of the Finders have agreed to grant interviews to investigators and that police were seeking the assistance of other Finders members.

Yesterday afternoon R. Gardner Terrell, a senior member of the Finders, said in an interview at the Finders' Northeast Washington warehouse that he was "exhilarated" at "the good news we're not a satanic cult."

In an interview with reporter Mr. Terrell wore a plastic Ronald Reagan mask on the back of his head and said he had been chosen to be the "leader" of the Finders for yesterday. He also denied that the seven child members of the Finders have ever been abused by the 21 adult group members.

Mr. Terrell denied the six children recovered in Tallahassee were abused in any way by the two men taken into custody. He said in the hierarchy of the Finders, children are first, women are second and men are third.

"These children always had food available," he said. "The children were not hungry. There was food in the van [used to transport the children that was recovered by police]."

Mr. Terrell said the mothers of the six children were in the District yesterday and had talked to police.

He also explained why police found photos of children watching animals being slaughtered. The Finders bought two goats last spring and kept them through the summer, he said. As winter approached, the animals were slaughtered in front of the children and other Finders members as a "learning experience."

"We butchered them and ate them, like you would on any farm. We did it when the children were present and thought it would be a good learning experience."

A tour of the Finders' warehouse yesterday afternoon revealed rooms that resembled the average college dormitory room. Most of the rooms in two second-story lofts contained blankets, pillows, cushions, televisions, radios, magazines, books and newspapers. On the first level was an extensive library, with hundreds of books, magazines and newspapers. Also on the first floor was a hot tub room, a meeting room, a living room and a kitchen.

"We're just a group of people who like to practice the art of living," Mr. Terrell said. "We look at the past and the future. We try to live a zesty and adventurous life. We're on the cutting edge of the wit and humor movement."

Mr. Terrell said the Finders' first priority is to get their children back in their custody. But according to a Florida social services official, it may be some time before the group can regain their children.

On Sunday, Merrill Moody, a district administrator for Florida's De-

partment of Health and Rehabilitative Services, said Florida and District officials, along with a behavioral psychologist from the FBI, will conduct videotaped interviews with each of the children to try to clarify their identities, and determine how they have been cared for in the past.

The interviews will be conducted by one person, while the others watch from behind two-way mirrors, Mr. Moody said.

Under Florida's child dependency laws, the six youngsters can continue to be held in protective custody for an indefinite time pending an investigation by the state and D.C. Child and Family Service Administration officials into their background, Mr. Moody said.

Even if guardians do come forward, the state cannot release the children into their custody without a court order, he said. A court order cannot be obtained until the probe into the children's background in the District is complete, he said.

"Until we know they have a safe and healthy environment to return to, they will remain in our custody," Mr. Moody said.

# Cult Member Defends 2 in Child Abuse Case

By Victoria Churchville  
and Martin Weil  
Washington Post Staff Writers

A man identifying himself as a member of the group that includes the two men arrested in Florida last week on child abuse charges came forward last night to identify the children with whom the men were found and to defend the men against the charges.

In a printed statement and a telephone interview, Robert Gardner Terrell, 50, who said he owned the Washington house said to be a base for the Finders, the group to which the two belong, gave detailed explanations for the group's practices and activities, which have been characterized as unusual or bizarre.

Asserting that the six children found in Tallahassee with the men had been formally placed in the care of at least one of the men by the ~~children's~~ mothers, he denied that the children had been abused or neglected. Tallahassee police said six disheveled and hungry children were found in a downtown park with the men.

Affidavits filed in U.S. District Court here in support of search warrants executed last week at a Northwest duplex and a Northeast warehouse owned by Terrell described "satanism" and "rituals" associated with the "cult."

"We are all in a state right now where we are afraid. We've been made almost dysfunctional by the reports," Terrell said in a lengthy telephone interview last night. He said he released the statement to police and news organizations "to establish some kind of credibility that we are rational people, not devil worshipers or child molesters."

"Certainly anything we've done is based on the desire for the children to have the richest life they could have," Terrell continued. "Children

always come first in our organization."

Terrell's statement was delivered last night to The Washington Post only hours after police seized materials at five rural Virginia locations as part of an expanding investigation touched off by the arrests of the two men in Tallahassee on Wednesday.

In addition, authorities were searching throughout the Southeast yesterday for a van believed to be carrying associates of the two men. Law enforcement officials were also sifting through mountains of materials previously seized in raids on Washington locations linked to the group.

In his typed statement, Terrell, a private accountant and former employee of the Internal Revenue Service, said two men and six children from the group left Washington early last month for Berea, Ky., where they were to work on a retirement community. After finding that the site was not ready for groundbreaking, the men took the children on a vacation and camping trip to Florida with the children's mothers' approval, he said.

Other men went to Florida to help care for the children, and three had left for the day to look for accommodations when two of the men were arrested, the statement said.

"I consider that the authorities have mistakenly incarcerated these men and children," Terrell said in the statement, which he said he circulated last night "in the hope that it will clear up some misunderstanding . . ."

Of the six children taken into custody by authorities Wednesday, when the investigation began, one showed signs of sexual abuse, Tallahassee police said, but none provided a full account of what was believed to be their journey from Washington to Florida.

In response to the suggestion of sexual abuse, the man who identified himself as Terrell said last night that it might have occurred after the children were taken from those assigned to care for them. It "might have happened after she was out of our control," he said. He said the children were healthy and well nourished.

Police said they received several calls from grandparents and other relatives claiming some of the children. One Washington area man told the FBI he was on his way to Tallahassee to claim his grandson. But police said they will not release any of the children without a court order.

The discovery of the children and the arrest of the two men led D.C. authorities to search a Northeast Washington warehouse and a Glover Park apartment building where several Finders members lived. D.C. police yesterday sifted through extensive computer records and color slides and photographic contact sheets removed by authorities.

U.S. Customs agents who saw some of the photos Friday said they appeared to involve sexual activities between adults and children, according to Customs spokesman David Hoover. "We're not saying that it's pornography, but it has all the earmarks," Hoover said.

However, D.C. police sources characterized the pictures as "ritualistic" and not pornographic. One police source said that the photos were "no more pornographic than what you find in the average home." They said the pictures of naked children were innocent, but there were some showing children in "ritualistic" ceremonies including the bloodletting of animals.

Cont

In the telephone interview late last night, Terrell described the so-called bloodletting as the slaughter of two goats kept on a farm in Virginia "for the kids to play with." At the end of the summer, he said, the members decided it would be more humane to slaughter and eat the animals rather than to let them starve in their pen.

He said the slaughter was intended as an educational experience. "I don't see why it's so bizarre," he added, "but it's been seized on by the authorities."

Based on interviews and on items seized in the raids, law enforcement sources said that the group does not appear to be engaged in the child pornography industry or in kidnapping and said they do not fully understand the group.

"These people are not into hurting the children physically," said one law enforcement source. "They're into molding them mentally."

Among the items seized in the Friday raids were computerized messages concerning what the group called the proper "programming" of the children, and how they are "demagnetized," the law enforcement source said.

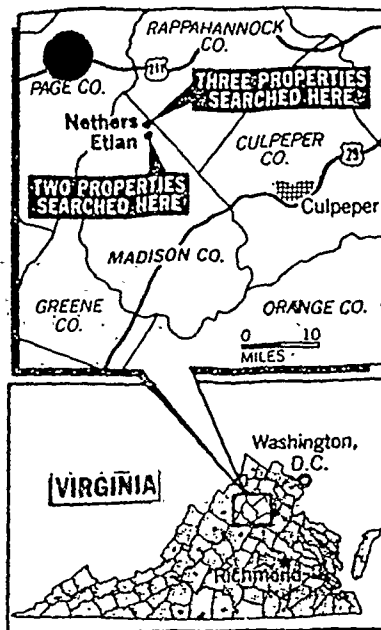
Other items seized included financial records indicating that the group has substantial assets, including bank accounts, the source said.

Other seized documents include files showing the organization has researched numerous industries, such as the fast food industry, and papers suggesting that the group operates a wide network of corporations, the source said.

Other files seized showed that some members of the group have worked in low-level jobs in the federal and District governments, the source said.

In Etlan, Va., about 100 miles southwest of Washington, state police said they found "several items of evidentiary nature" after yesterday's 2:30 a.m. search of properties reportedly owned by Marion Pettie, leader of the Finders.

Virginia and Madison County authorities would not describe what they found at two farms, one near



BY DAVID ZUCKERMAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Etlan and the other a few miles away in a hamlet called Nethers. A house and at least three cabins on the land were unoccupied, and police said much of the property appeared not to have been inhabited for some time.

The door of one cabin was open yesterday, revealing large amounts of food, clothing, sleeping bags, books and pamphlets from groups such as the World Future Society. A plastic bag containing hundreds of neckties and several pairs of panty hose were on the floor, along with boxes of diapers.

In the woods outside the cabin, badly weathered tents and sleeping bags were scattered on the ground next to a swing set made of rope and milk cases. Neighbors in the remote farming community have said they routinely saw as many as several dozen people, including large groups of children, riding to the farms and hiking and camping in the nude during the summer. Some neighbors spoke highly of Pettie, saying he traveled often and was often helpful to local residents.

Meanwhile, the FBI and Tallahassee

seek leads on a white van. Sources said was with the blue van that police found Wednesday. Police said the two vans may have been in radio contact. Witnesses told police that the white van was occupied by two well-dressed men and two children. It has not been seen since.

Law enforcement agencies throughout the Southeast United States were asked yesterday to look for the white van, and Tallahassee police said they were examining leads reported by Miami and Gainesville, Fla., police.

Miami police searching computer intelligence files reported two vehicles, a white 1985 Dodge with Virginia tags and a white 1982 Dodge van with Virginia tags. Gainesville police reported a sighting two days ago of an older model—late '60s or '70s—green Chevy Suburban or Chevy International van occupied by several well dressed men and several children. Hunt would not comment further on the sightings.

Hunt said police do not know when the two men and six children in the blue van left the Washington area or how long they had been on the road. One of the youngsters told police that the children last saw their parents in Washington around Christmas and that while traveling they had been camping out in tents at campgrounds. Police said they found no bedding or camping equipment in the van. The van was heavy with the smell of unwashed clothes and rotting fruit and vegetables, police said.

The two men arrested Wednesday, identified as Douglas Ammerman, 27, and James Michael Houlihan, 23, have been charged with aggravated child abuse and resisting arrest without violence, both misdemeanors in Florida. They were each being held in lieu of \$100,000 bond.

Houlihan is the father of one of the children and stepfather of another, according to police and former members of the Finders. Houlihan told police late Friday that he wanted to talk to a detective, but when police sent an investigator, Houlihan had changed his mind, police said. Police said that this could

cont.

be another of the games that the Finders are said to play.

Authorities said they have not interviewed the children since they were found Wednesday. Lt. Michael Langston said last night that social workers are awaiting the arrival of counselors from the FBI. No timetable has been set for the interview, which will be videotaped.

Meanwhile, District police theorize that members of the commune were tipped off to the impending raid on their Washington bases when Tallahassee police called the W Street house sometime Wednesday, seeking information about the children. "That alerted them to what was going on," a District police source said. "That's why we didn't find anything anywhere."

Former members of the group said the Finders routinely practiced leaving their house on short notice.

In his printed statement, Terrell said that Ammerman was one of the two men who originally left Washington with the six children. He listed in the statement names for all six children, and identified their mothers. At least five of the women have been identified by other sources as members of the Finders.

Terrell said that Ammerman and another man took the children to Florida and that afterward, Michael Holwell, also known as Michael Houlihan, and four other men, including Terrell himself, went to Florida to care for the children.

Terrell said that he and another man left Florida after being satisfied that the children were well cared for.

He said the children's mothers are in San Francisco, "working in business offices" to earn money to help pay for the Kentucky project.

Identifying himself as the owner of both the Glover Park apartment building and the Northeast Washington warehouse used by the Finders, Terrell said he could not return home because he feared that based on news reports "the police would arrest me."

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*Staff writers John Ward Anderson, Ed Bruske, Marc Fisher, John F. Harris, John Mintz and Linda Wheeler contributed to this report.*

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# Officials Describe 'Cult Rituals' in Child Abuse Case

## Photos of Youngsters Seized At D.C. Warehouse, Probers Say

By Sandra Saperstein and Victoria Churchville  
*Washington Post Staff Writers*

Authorities investigating the alleged abuse of six children found with two men in a Tallahassee, Fla., park discovered materials yesterday in the Washington area that they say points to a 1960s-style commune called the Finders, described in a court document as a "cult" that allegedly conducted "brainwashing" and used children "in rituals."

D.C. police, who searched a Northeast Washington warehouse linked to the group, removed large plastic bags filled with color slides, photographs and photographic contact sheets. Some photos visible through a bag carried from the warehouse at 1307 Fourth St. NE were wallet-sized pictures of children, similar to school photos, and some were of naked children.

D.C. police sources said some of the items seized yesterday showed pictures of children engaged in what appeared to be "cult rituals." Officials of the U.S. Customs Service, called in to aid in the investigation, said that the material seized yesterday includes photos showing children involved in bloodletting ceremonies of animals and one photograph of a child in chains. Customs officials said they were looking into whether a child pornography operation was being conducted.

According to court documents, computers and software were seized from the warehouse, from a Glover Park apartment building and from a van that was recovered in Tallahassee along with the children.

Yesterday's disclosures about the mysterious group grew out of an investigation that was set in motion Wednesday by an anonymous call to Tallahassee police about two "well-dressed men" who were "supervising" six disheveled children in a neighborhood park. The men were arrested and charged with child abuse, according to Tallahassee police.

Their links to the D.C. area have led authorities into a far-reaching investigation that includes the Finders—a group of about 40 people

that court documents allege is led by a man named Marion Pettie—and their various homes, including the duplex apartment building in Glover Park, the Northeast Washington warehouse and a 90-acre farm in rural Madison County, Va.

Tallahassee police, who arrested and charged men identified as Douglas E. Ammerman and Michael Houlihan with child abuse, contacted D.C. police Thursday in an attempt to establish the identities of the children. They learned that D.C. police had heard of the Finders group, according to Tallahassee police spokesman Scott Hunt.

No other member of the group had been located last night, police sources said.

According to U.S. District Court records in Washington, a confidential police source had previously told authorities that the Finders were "a cult" that conducted "brainwashing" techniques at the warehouse and the Glover Park duplex at 3918-20 W St. NW. This source told of being recruited by the Finders with promises of "financial reward and sexual gratification" and of being invited by one member to explore "satanism" with them, according to the documents.

According to the affidavit, the source told authorities that children were used in "rituals" by the members, and though the source had never witnessed abuse of the children, the source said the children's grandparents feared for their safety.

On Dec. 15, a D.C. police detective observed a clearing in the rear of the 3900 block of W Street NW where "several round stones had been gathered" near a circle, as well as evidence that people had gathered there, according to the document, which stated that "this practice is sometimes used in satanic rituals." Armed with that information and the report from Tallahassee police of the allegedly abused children, D.C. police sought search warrants for the Glover Park residence and the warehouse.

Meanwhile, authorities in Florida attempted to learn more about the six small children—described by a police spokesman as "hungry and ... pretty pathetic"—who had set the investigation in motion.

The children, identified in a court document only by the first names of Honeybee, John, Franklin, BeeBee, Max and Mary, were described as "dirty, unkempt, hungry, disturbed and agitated." They had been living in the rear of the van for some time, the document said.

Yesterday, police spokesman Hunt said one of the children, a 6-year-old girl, "showed signs of sexual abuse," but that an examination by a local doctor showed none of the children as being ill.

Five of the children were uncommunicative, according to police, and none seemed to recognize objects such as typewriters and staplers.

However, the oldest was able to give investigators some information. She said that the two men "were their teachers," according to Hunt. She was not sure where they had been recently or where they were going. But until recently, they had been living in the District in "a house with other children and adults." They lived mainly on a diet of raw fruit and vegetables, she said.

The girl told the police that while they were in the District, the children received instruction from "a man they called a Game Caller or a Game Leader," according to Hunt.

According to the D.C. court document, a Tallahassee police investigator identified this man as Marion Pettie, who the confidential police source "also identified as the Stroller, leader of this 'cult.'"

The children have been placed in emergency shelters in Tallahassee, according to Merrill Moody of the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. He said officials were trying to identify them.

Neighbors of the W Street house last night identified the photographs of two of the children as residents of the house.

Before their arrests in the park, Ammerman and Houlihan had told police that they were teachers from Washington "transporting these children to Mexico and a school for brilliant children," according to Hunt. When police asked the men where the children's mothers were, "they said they were being weaned from their mothers."

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Yesterday, U.S. Attorney Joseph E. diGenova said that authorities were investigating "the crime of kidnaping" but that the investigation "is not limited to that as the evidence evolves."

George Wisnowsky, spokesman for the FBI in Jacksonville, said the FBI was "checking the transportation of children across state lines for immoral purposes or kidnaping."

Authorities in Florida, who searched the van, found 20 floppy computer discs and a device Hunt said could be used to hook into a computer in another location by telephone. He said D.C. police have obtained evidence that a computer linked to the group received a call from Tallahassee late this week.

Meanwhile, authorities in Washington were busy searching the warehouse and the Glover Park residence, side-by-side brick apartment buildings that, according to neighbors, stood out in the neighborhood because of a hot tub and satellite dish on the roof. Only women and children lived there, though men visited regularly, according to neighbors.

One woman from the neighborhood said the children from the house were "easy to spot because they were so dirty," adding that adults with them "seemed not to care." She said the group from the house reminded her of "leftover hippies."

But another neighbor, college professor John Matthews, who said he had lived at 3918 W St. for a short time while looking for an apartment, said the residents were "a close-knit group" of feminists who liked to help people and were not a cult. "The neighborhood talks about them because of their life style," Matthews said.

The Fourth Street warehouse, which authorities said also was used as a residence, had windows that were boarded shut. One wall was covered with a huge map of the world, lit by floodlights. Upstairs, mattresses were flung on the floors of various rooms.

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*Staff writers Joseph E. Bouchard, Ed Bruske, John Harris and Linda Wheeler contributed to this report.*

*JL*

# Finders Group Has Roots In Popular '60s Hippie Refuge

Wash. Post 2/7/87

By Marc Fisher and John Mintz  
Washington Post Staff Writers

The Finders—about 40 people who lived in a Glover Park house, a Northeast Washington warehouse and a farm in rural Virginia—are what remains of a popular 1960s hippie refuge that evolved into a society dedicated to communalism and to studying the future, according to court documents, experts on cults and law enforcement officials.

A fragmentary sketch of the Finders emerged yesterday as investigators, cult experts, neighbors and social workers scrambled to figure out whether children of group members were mistreated and who the Finders are.

Wherever outsiders had contact with the Finders, they considered the group odd. There was talk of houses segregated by sex, children separated from their parents, vans that came and went, and a mysterious guru who called himself the Stroller and fancied himself a seer and a political powerhouse.

Before yesterday, police had had little contact with the group. One complaint five years ago prompted an investigation that found no evidence of criminal activity, a District police source said. And in December, District police found an ornate tombstone and round stones gathered near a circle about 70 yards behind the Glover Park house. Such stones are often used in satanic rituals, experts said.

Neighbors have complained only rarely and then simply about the noise. And some people who visited or stayed at the commune said they met intelligent, interesting people who showed no signs of odd behavior or mistreatment of children.

As long ago as 1968, hippies and peace activists in Washington often visited Pettie Farm, a 90-acre property in Madison County, Va., near Shenandoah National Park. Four people who visited The Farm, as it was known, between 1968 and 1973 said yesterday it was a place where anyone could get an organic meal without charge, without questions. They recalled a leader in his forties, a charismatic and wealthy man named Marion Pettie.

About five years ago, neighbors of the farm said, the hippie followers of Pettie were replaced by men in business suits and women in professional clothes.

Pettie and his followers had a house at 3920 W St. NW in Glover Park, where members of the group lived until recent weeks, neighbors said. The house consists of two attached red brick buildings, each with four apartments.

There, female members of the Finders lived with children in apartments with no locks on the doors. The group occasionally distributed fliers offering shared rooms for as little as \$5 a night.

"I noticed the children often went without clothes in the summer," said Gerald Salzman, a neighbor. "I thought it was cute and natural." Still, Salzman said he once called police to tell them about a child who was screaming for more than an hour.

Another neighbor, who asked not to be identified, said she once asked the mother of a 6- or 7-year-old child who lived in the Finders house why the girl didn't go to school. "She said that [the child] was taught at home," the neighbor said.

George Pettie, son of Marion Pettie, said that the group is like an extended family largely made up of people who have dropped out of professional careers and are under his father's sway.

"The binder is they have a father now, and they get to play fun games," said George Pettie, who owns a Northern Virginia home inspection business and said he hasn't talked to his father in two years. "They're the kids, and they're obedient. They like to do what the father says to do."

George Pettie said that he doesn't know of any group members practicing satanism or abusing children. But he said the lives of the children is unpleasant because group members rear them collectively. Frequently, Marion Pettie, now 66, would assign a follower to a

cont.



"game" or "adventure" overseas or in another city, and the group member would not see his children for months.

George Pettie said the group engaged in "constant baby sitting . . . I wouldn't want to be a child there, without a reliable day-in-day-out parent figure." He said of the children found in the van in Florida, "I bet you a buck, you'll find their biological mothers live at W Street, and if they're not there now, they're off on some adventure."

Marion Pettie continually sent his followers on what he called "adventures" to teach them about themselves, his son said. If someone had some character weakness, the leader would send him or her away to, say, Hawaii to work, then return to describe his lesson to other members.

The members support themselves in temporary office jobs in Washington, George Pettie said.

He described his father as charismatic and perceptive, having "a keen sense of what people need that they don't even know themselves."

Marion Pettie retired from the Air Force in 1956 as a master sergeant, and has done little formal work since then, his son said. In the 1960s, he was a "student of the world" who would spend the whole day in the library near the family farm, said his son. Then around 1971 he gathered his followers in the W Street house.

"That was the beginning of a new life for him," George Pettie said. "They found in their communal life style a more adventurous life."

Marion Pettie has long had a consuming interest in the future, and futurism is a major component of the group's philosophy, according to cult experts. Originally he based his teachings on Carlos Castaneda's popular 1960s chronicles of mystic self-exploration, a precursor of the New Age movement of the 1970s.

Edwin Morse, a Wisconsin psychologist who works with cult members, said he has tracked the Finders for five years, interviewing several members. He said the members are well-educated, secretive people who have "no clear parental kind of responsibility as we know it," instead sharing responsibility for the children. He said most of the children who lived with the group were born to members.

In the summer, neighbors saw as many as a dozen children at the Madison County farm. "There was always hollering and screaming going on," said Wilma Richards. "They were always hollering about Momma and Daddy. One time I heard one say 'I want milk.' Another person said, 'Shut up, you ain't gonna get it.'"

Another neighbor of the farm said he spoke to an 11-year-old boy, who said the children didn't go to school because no adults told them to.

"They always talked '60s jargon, 'Do your own thing' stuff," the man said. He said members of the Finders appeared to hold jobs in computer businesses.

The group split its membership by sex some time ago, leaving the women to live in the Glover Park house while the men moved into the warehouse at 1307 Fourth St. NE, McArthur said.

Cult experts said the past few years they have seen increased interest among such groups in satanism and witchcraft. The circle of stone District police reported finding behind the Glover Park house in December is typical of witchcraft ceremonies, said Richard Stephens a sociology professor at George Washington University.

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*Staff writers John Ward Anderson, Linda Wheeler and John F. Harris contributed to this report.*

# Officials delve into mystery of found children

By Rosalind Bentley  
Democrat staff writer

TALLAHASSEE  
DEMOCRAT  
23-257

Police in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., late Thursday were still trying to determine the identities of six children found with two men in Myers Park on Wednesday afternoon, authorities said.

The men, identified as Michael Houlihan, 28, and Douglas Edward Ammerman, 27, both of Washington, were charged with child abuse and were being held in the Leon County Jail on \$100,000 bond each, Tallahassee police spokesman Scott Hunt and jail officials said.

The children were in the custody of the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

Police got an anonymous call late Wednesday afternoon about two well-dressed men standing in Myers Park with six unkempt children, Hunt said.

When police arrived they found the men standing near a foul-smelling blue Dodge van with Virginia license plates. The children, ages 2 to 6, were playing on the playground, Hunt said.

Houlihan and Ammerman told Officer Tony Mashburn that they were the youngsters' teachers and were taking them to Mexico to establish a school for "brilliant children," Hunt said. They responded evasively when Mashburn asked them other questions, Hunt added.

Authorities said the children — a 6-year-old boy and girl, a 4-year-old boy, two 2-year-old boys and a 3-year-old girl — were filthy. Insect bites and scratches covered their bodies, most were not wearing underwear and they looked as though they had not bathed in days, Hunt said. Officer Judy Suchocki tried to talk with the children but only one, the 6-year-old girl, was very responsive, Hunt said.

The girl told Suchocki that she and one of the 2-year-old boys were the children of Houlihan. The girl also told Suchocki that they all used to live together in a house in Washington, but that they had been traveling for a while.

Both Houlihan and Ammerman denied having any blood relationship to any of the children, Hunt said.

Because police have not been able to determine any legal or blood ties between the men and the children, Ammerman and Houlihan were charged with child abuse instead of child neglect, Lt. Colon Benton said.

None of the children knew where they were supposed to be going, only that they had stopped at "different places," and slept in the van and in tents in campgrounds along the way. The girl also told Suchocki that none of them have seen their mothers since before Christmas and that they were being "weaned" from them, Hunt said.

The children also said they didn't go to school but were taught by Houlihan and Ammerman. Benton said the children seemed unfamiliar with common office equipment such as telephones and staplers.

## Children

From 1A

According to police, the children said they were hungry and had not eaten since Wednesday morning. But the children said they had to work for their food by doing such tasks as cleaning the van. Even then, they were given raw fruits and vegetables to eat as "rewards," Hunt said.

Police said they found a Washington telephone number inside the van. When investigators called it, they got a recording that quoted Scriptures and had other religious messages, Hunt said.

Detectives from the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington are conducting an investigation there to determine whether or not the children and the men were ever in the nation's capital, Metro police spokesman Capt. William White III said. Police there are also trying to determine whether the men were involved in any criminal activities, White said. He declined, however, to give any further details.

"We are still in the very early stages of the investigation," White said Thursday night.

But Hunt said Washington authorities have verified an address thought to be where the children and the two men were living. Local police were planning to send photographs and fingerprints of the children to Washington for tracking.

HRS officials took custody of the children Wednesday night and put them in an emergency shelter, said Debra Ervin, HRS administrative-services director.

On Thursday, the six children were examined by a child-protection team to determine whether they have been abused or neglected, Ervin said. Results of the exams were not immediately available.

See CHILDREN, 5A

# Memorandum



To : SAC, WMFO (31C-WF-189911) (P) Date 11/9/93

From : SA [redacted] (C-4)

b6  
b7C

Subject: "FINDERS" GROUP;  
WSTA - SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN;  
OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE - PI;  
OO: WMFO

Attached to this memo is a photocopy of the Washington Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) case file concerning captioned group. This material was provided to writer and SSA [redacted] on 11/09/93 by [redacted] MPD Intelligence Division, room 5067, 300 Indiana Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C.

INDEX  
AS MARKED  
*[Signature]*

2-WMFO  
MDC:mdc

31C-WF-189911-2  
sub M

CC - FBI HQ - VCU  
11/9/93


SEARCHED	INDEXED
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FBI - WASH. FIELD OFFICE	

*[Signature]*

P.D. 15 Rev. 2/90

Metropolitan Police Department  
Washington, D.C.

Office of the Chief of Police

TO:		Date	10/26/93
	ASSISTANT CHIEF PATROL OPERATIONS BUREAU	Approved	
		Attend	
	ASSISTANT CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES BUREAU	Call Me	
		Comment	
	ASSISTANT CHIEF TECHNICAL SERVICES BUREAU	Consideration	
		Contact Writer	
	ASSISTANT CHIEF INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES BUREAU	Disapproved	
		Expedite	
	OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> File	
		Handle	
	OFFICE OF FINANCE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information	
		Invest. & Report	
	OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND MEDIA PRODUCTIONS	Noted	
		Prepare Order	
	EXECUTIVE PROTECTION UNIT	Prepare Reply	
		Reply Direct	
		Represent COP	
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REMARKS: \_\_\_\_\_  
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THE COMMANDING OFFICER, INVESTIGATIVE  
SERVICES DIVISION, METROPOLITAN POLICE  
DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D.C.~~ (U)

DATE: OCTOBER 19, 1993

CLIENT:   
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FILE: PAPERS, MAGS

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED b6  
DATE 02-12-2014 BY NSICG/F63M8 b7C

YOUR SEARCH REQUEST IS:  
FINDERS ORGANIZATION

NUMBER OF STORIES FOUND WITH YOUR REQUEST THROUGH:  
LEVEL 1... 7

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10-19-93

4TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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February 10, 1987, Tuesday, SPORTS FINAL EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 2; ZONE: C

LENGTH: 384 words

HEADLINE: PROBE CAN'T PROVE CHILD ABUSE BY CULT

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SERVICES DIVISION, METROPOLITAN POLICE  
DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D.C.~~

BODY:

An investigation begun last year into the mysterious Finders communal group, linked to six disheveled children found in Florida, failed to substantiate allegations of child abuse, District of Columbia police said Monday.

Police Chief Maurice Turner Jr. said an anonymous informant's allegations that the Finders are "a cult and that its activities involve Satanic rituals" were not borne out by police stakeouts in December or by evidence seized at two Finders' homes last week.

Turner said "we want to assure ourselves" that the children were not abused. "We have not assured ourselves at this point in time," he said at a news conference.

"The lifestyle of the so-called Finders organization may differ from the societal norm," but no evidence of criminal wrongdoing has been uncovered, he said.

The children, ranging in age from 2 to 7, remained in temporary shelters in Tallahassee, Fla. The two men who had custody of the children when they were discovered last Wednesday are under arrest on child abuse charges.

Police in Tallahassee have said that more than one of the children showed signs of sexual abuse. They did not elaborate.

Tallahassee police spokesman Scott Hunt said Washington detectives, who traveled to Florida to interview the children, were assisting in trying to identify the children.

The FBI, the U.S. Customs Service and police in Virginia also were assisting with the investigation.

"They're doing fine," Hunt said of the children. "They've been fed well, they've been clothed well and they're eating and sleeping."

Turner said that the mothers of the children still had not come forward and that police had not yet identified them.

A spokesman for the Finders group, Robert Gardner Terrell, said Monday that the children's mothers "are here in Washington. There already have been conversations" with police. He spoke at a small news conference at the group's warehouse, sitting with his back to cameras with a Ronald Reagan mask on the back of his head.

(c) 1987 Chicago Tribune, February 10, 1987

Terrell said the organization's first priority is getting the children back.

"It's a relief and I'm exhilarated to hear we are not a Satanic cult," said Terrell. "However, we are still involved in an extensive and detailed review process of the documents and records seized."

TERMS: CULT; CHILD; ABUSE; PROBE

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5TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Washington Post

February 10, 1987, Tuesday, Final Edition

SECTION: METRO; PAGE D1

LENGTH: 784 words

HEADLINE: D.C. Police: Finders Odd, Not Criminal;  
FBI, Virginia and Florida Expand Probes

BYLINE: Victoria Churchville, Marc Fisher, Washington Post Staff Writer

BODY:

A District police investigation begun in December into allegations of child abuse and satanic rituals involving the Finders, a group linked to six ragtag children found last week in Florida, has produced evidence that the practices of the group were odd but not criminal, D.C. Police Chief Maurice T. Turner Jr. said yesterday.

"The life style of the so-called Finders organization may differ from the societal norm, but so far the Metropolitan Police Department has not uncovered any evidence of criminal wrongdoing by members of the group," Turner said at a news conference. He added, however, that documents and records seized last week are still being reviewed.

But even as police in the District softened their statements about the Finders group, the FBI and police in Virginia and Florida widened their investigation into the activities of the Washington-based commune of 20 to 40 adults and seven children.

Two of the six children, whom police said they found dirty and hungry in a Tallahassee park with two well-dressed men, showed indications of possible sexual abuse, according to an affidavit filed in Madison County, Va., where the group has two farms.

The men, Douglas E. Ammerman, 27, and James Michael Holwell, 23, who gave police the name Michael Houlihan, were arrested and charged with six counts each of child abuse. Florida authorities said yesterday that the two men, who are in jail in lieu of \$ 100,000 cash bond, have refused to talk with police.

Meanwhile, FBI agents in Washington yesterday interviewed Kristin Knauth, a woman associated with the group. She is said to be the mother of Benjamin Franklin Knauth, 4, one of the children found in Florida. Kristin Knauth could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Chief Turner said the D.C. investigation began in mid-December after an unnamed informant alleged that children were being physically and sexually abused at the group's house and that the group engaged in satanic activities.

He said those allegations have not been substantiated by police surveillance or by review of materials seized at the group's properties last week, nor has examination of those materials substantiated allegations of child pornography. No children have been at the Finders' residence since the investigation began,

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DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D.C.~~



The Washington Post, February 10, 1987

Turner said. He said that as yet police "have not assured" themselves that children in the group have not been abused.

In an interview, Robert Gardner Terrell, a key member of the group, said that the children have been traveling in Virginia, Kentucky and Florida since before Christmas with men in the group while their mothers were in San Francisco on "an earning and learning adventure." He said a seventh child, an infant, has been in Boulder, Colo.

"We've received hundreds and hundreds of calls about the children," Tallahassee police spokesman Scott Hunt said yesterday. "They're doing fine now. They're well fed and they're clothed and they're in shelter."

Virginia state police said yesterday that they found goat skins and a goat's head in their search of the Finders' rural lands over the weekend. Spokesman Charles Vaughan said police also found computer equipment and documents, but he did not comment on the significance of the material.

In an affidavit supporting the search, Virginia authorities included photographs showing three white-robed Finders men and several children dismembering two goats. The photographs were in a scrapbook titled "The Execution of Henrietta and Igor." In one picture, a crying child looked at a decapitated goat. Another photo was captioned, "Ben finds Henrietta's Womb." Three pictures showed children playing with goat fetuses.

Carl Shapley, a Washington educator who said he worked closely with Finders leader Marion Pettie during the past year, said the group's ceremonies involved the slaughter of goats, but he warned against associating such activities with satanism or pagan rites.

"They believe in games and this was just good fun, a very Alice-in-Wonderland kind of fun, dressing up in white robes or whatever," he said.

Even as Shapley and others rose to defend the Finders, calling them an odd but entirely benign group of intellectual explorers and social adventurers, former members of the group came forward to relate tales of being harassed by the Finders.

A lawyer in Culpeper, Va., said the Finders sent him profane letters and slashed his car's tires when he represented a former member in a divorce case three years ago. John Davies, the lawyer, said the harassment stopped only after he obtained a court order prohibiting members of the group from contacting him.

Staff writers John F. Harris and John Mintz contributed to this report.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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**LEXIS NEXIS LEXIS NEXIS**

6TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The New York Times

February 10, 1987, Tuesday, Late City Final Edition

SECTION: Section A; Page 21, Column 1; National Desk

LENGTH: 843 words

HEADLINE: POLICE SAY UNIDENTIFIED CHILDREN IN FLORIDA ~~WAS NOT A CULT~~

BYLINE: By PHILIP SHENON, Special to the New York Times

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, Feb. 9

BODY:

Local police officials announced here today that six children found last week in Florida had apparently not been kidnapped and that there was no evidence to show that the secretive group that has been raising them is a cult involved in child abuse.

The statement from the Metropolitan Police Department conflicted with accounts from the police in Tallahassee, Fla., where the children were found, unwashed and hungry, last week. Officials there said this morning that at least two of the children had signs of sexual abuse.

But late today, the Police Chief in Washington, Maurice T. Turner Jr., said at a news conference that there was no evidence of criminal activity by the communal group known as The Finders. However, he said the investigation would continue.

Two Men Were Arrested

Chief Turner's announcement was another confusing twist in the investigation that began last Wednesday when the children and two men were found in a Tallahassee park. According to the Tallahassee police, the children could not identify themselves and said the two men were teachers. The men were arrested and charged with child abuse.

Law-enforcement officials suggested that Chief Turner was attempting to end recent speculation that the group was involved in satanic rituals at a Washington home.

After the children were found last week, the police searched the home and a warehouse in the northwest section of Washington, and seized photographs and documents that one source in Florida originally said were "consistent with a satanic cult."

Statements by Finders Spokesman

The Washington police said that the children, two girls and four boys who ranged in age from 2 to 7 years, were apparently the offspring of members of the Finders, which the police said was a secretive group in which the sexes are separated and children are raised communally. Acknowledging that the group's practices were unusual, the officials said it had not engaged in criminal

(c) 1987 The New York Times, February 10, 1987

practices.

Robert Gardner Terrell, a spokesman for the Finders, said his group had cooperated with the police and that the mothers of the children had spoken with the authorities, according to an Associated Press report.

Mr. Terrell, who appeared at a news conference wearing a mask bearing President Reagan's image, said the organization's first priority was getting the children back.

"We've been in constant contact with the authorities," he said. "It hasn't been on the basis of interrogation. It's been in terms of cooperation. Sooner or later we knew people in Tallahassee would recognize their mistake."

#### Photographs of Goats

Officials confirmed that photographs found in buildings used by the Finders showed children watching goats being slaughtered. But they indicated that the activity was not illegal, nor did it suggest pornography.

"There was apparently the killing of goats and some type of blood," Chief Turner said, adding that it appeared the children did not participate in the killing. Other police officials suggested that the goats were actually butchered for meat, not for some sort of satanic animal sacrifice.

"A photograph can paint 1,001 pictures," Chief Turner said.

"The life style of the so-called Finders organization may differ from the societal norm," he added, "but so far, the Metropolitan Police Department has not uncovered any evidence of criminal wrongdoing by members of the group.

"At this point the Metropolitan Police Department has not found any materials among the seized documents or records that would initially corroborate allegations made by an informant that the organization is a cult and that its activities involve satanic rituals.

#### Documents Being Reviewed

"However, we are still involved in an extensive and detailed review process of the documents and records seized," he added.

Asked if the group was dangerous, Chief Turner replied: "I don't really believe so. If they are a danger, from what I can see, they would be a danger to themselves."

Chief Turner said he had no evidence that any of the children had been molested and referred questions about physical abuse to the Florida officials.

Officials say the Finders apparently is a remnant of a 1960's counterculture movement created by Marion Pettie, a charismatic leader who urged his followers to study a doctrine that stressed self-exploration and futurism.

#### Children Allowed to Travel

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**LEXIS NEXIS LEXIS NEXIS**

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"Apparently it's an organization that started in the late 60's," Chief Turner said. "If you went back to that point in time there were a lot of communes and a lot of hippies, and I think it was a way of life for them. From that way of life it has escalated to what we have today as the Finders."

Members of the group, the police said, apparently permitted their children to travel to Florida for a time while they remained behind to work.

The two men arrested in the case were identified as Douglas Ammerman, 27 years old, and James M. Holwell 23. They were charged with aggravated child neglect, a misdemeanor, and held on \$100,000 bond.

SUBJECT: CHILD ABUSE; LOST, MISSING AND RUNAWAY CHILDREN

ORGANIZATION: FINDERS (ORGN)

NAME: SHENON, PHILIP

GEOGRAPHIC: WASHINGTON (DC); FLORIDA

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7TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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Los Angeles Times

February 8, 1987, Sunday, Home Edition

SECTION: Part 1; Page 2; Column 1; National Desk

LENGTH: 101 words

HEADLINE: THE NATION;  
VIRGINIA CULT SITES RAIDED

BODY:

Police seized computer records, color slides and photos at five rural Virginia locations linked to the Finders, reported to be a satanic cult, as authorities searched throughout the Southeast for a van they believed was carrying associates of the two group members arrested on child abuse charges in Tallahassee, Fla. Virginia authorities searched cabins and outbuildings in the mountainous Nethers and Etlan area of Madison County. Meanwhile, the six children found dirty and hungry in the van in Tallahassee were moved out of emergency shelters after threatening phone calls were received by police.

TYPE:  
Brief

SUBJECT:  
CULTS; FINDERS (ORGANIZATION) ; CHILD ABUSE; OCCULT SCIENCES

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P.D. 15 Rev. 3/86 METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT  
Washington, D.C.



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

TO: <i>d/c Cop</i>		DATE <i>5-5-87</i>
ASSISTANT CHIEF FIELD OPERATIONS BUREAU		Approved
		Comment
ASSISTANT CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES BUREAU		Consideration
		Contact Writer
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PD 15-E 9/81

METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT  
Washington, D. C.

INSPECTIONAL SERVICES BUREAU

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CHIEF OF POLICE	Approval
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL	Comments
ASSISTANT CHIEF FIELD OPERATIONS BUREAU	Consideration
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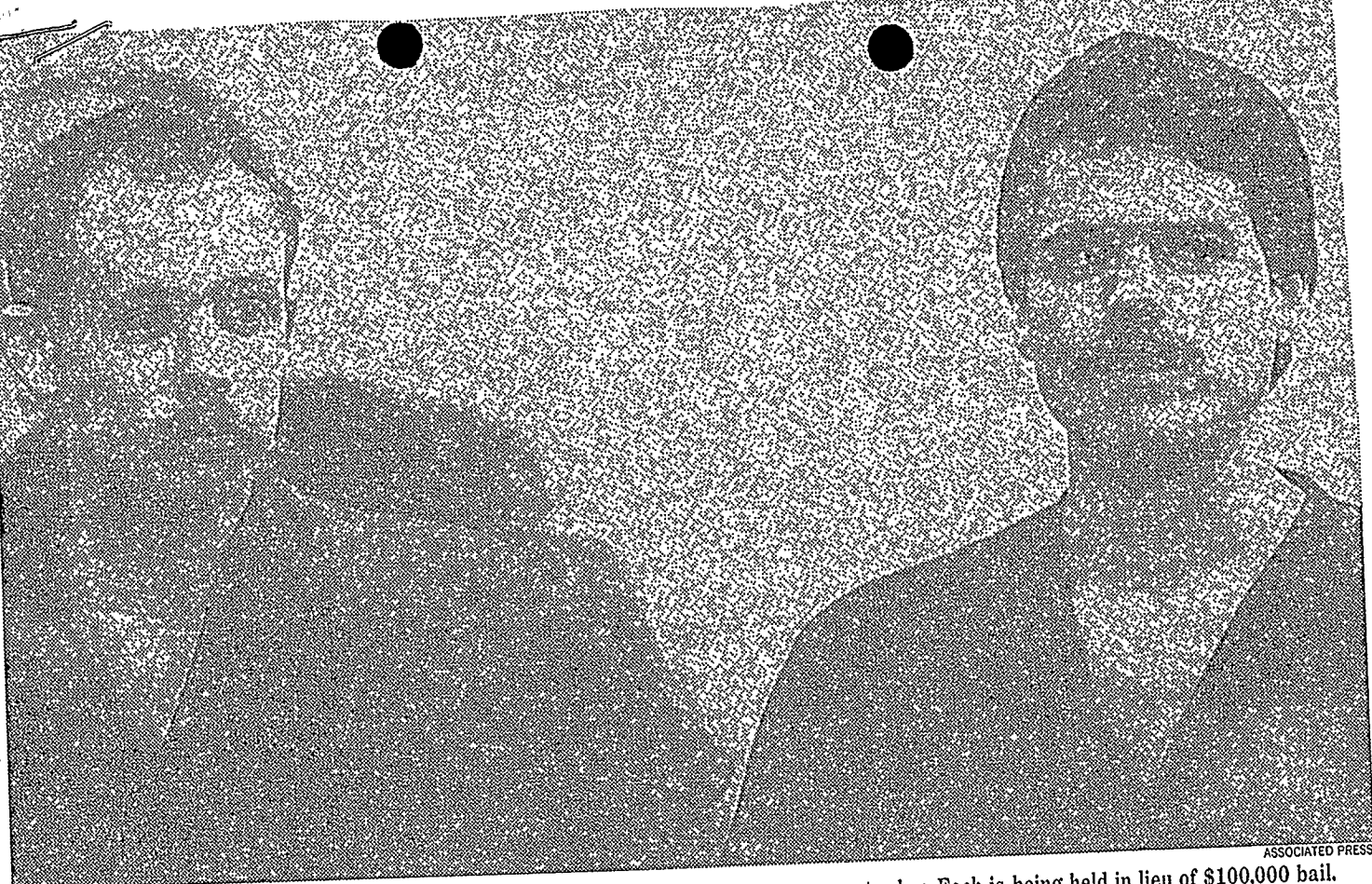
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DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D.C.~~

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

Douglas Ammerman, left, and Michael Holwell during appearance in Florida courtroom yesterday. Each is being held in lieu of \$100,000 bail.

# Officials Weigh Future of Finders' Children

## SPORTS George Washington's Birthday

### IRVING'S SHO

It is difficult to come up with numbers, said Patricia Marks, the child care coordinator, the

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and are currently being referred to federal agencies.

she never ... grandmother said. That woman's child also was placed in a city shelter temporarily. Finders spokesman Robert Gardner Terrell confirmed both incidents, explaining that Finders children are allowed to roam freely in the country but are supervised in the city.

Staff writer Victoria Churchville contributed to this report.

Mike Washington Post  
2/13/87

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DATE 03-06-2014 BY ADG/F63M84K93



*Finders*

# Finders Say They Fear For Children

## Five Women Seek Custody of Minors

*2/15/87*

By Victoria Churchville  
Washington Post Staff Writer

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., Feb. 14—  
Five women who belong to the Finders group and described themselves as the mothers of six children now in Florida state custody said today they fear the children have been traumatized by their separation from the group, and they vowed to fight to win back the children.

"I'm very concerned that the experience of being picked up by police, being interviewed by strangers, being cared for by strangers has been a very traumatic experience from the start for all the children," said Judith Evans, 31. She said her 3-year-old daughter Honey Bee "does not look happy in the media pictures I've seen. My major objective is to get all our children back."

The children were taken into state custody Feb. 4 after police here found them in a park with two members of the Finders group, a mysterious Washington area commune. The men, Douglas E. Ammerman, 27, and Michael Holwell, 23, each were charged with one count of child abuse. Authorities described the children as unkempt and hungry.

The women said they were in San Francisco at the time of the incident and that they immediately began taking steps to return. Authorities have said the women's struggle to regain custody of the children could be a protracted one.

"We started the processes as soon as we heard. It's been a very long process," said Pat Livingstone, mother of 6-year-old Max, one of the children taken into custody.

"If the FBI had said we're bad guys, everybody else would have, too. Now that they've said we're good guys, other authorities are saying they'll have to consider our case in turn," Livingstone said.

The women displayed little emo-

See FINDERS, B17, Col. 1

# Women of Children

District of Columbia Protective Services officials have twice taken custody of some of the Finders children, once in 1984 after some were allegedly found wandering cold and hungry near the group's Northeast warehouse, and a year later, after one of the mothers refused to leave her family's home, according to the grandmother of one of the children, Finders spokesman and a government official.

In both cases, District social workers were swayed by how the mothers presented themselves as parents, according to the grandmother.

*The Washington Post  
2/15/87*

87-225

Post

... SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1987 A5

# Finders Get 6 Children

## *Temporary Custody Granted to Mothers*

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., Feb. 27—  
The mothers of six children found at a city playground with two men belonging to a Washington-based communal group called the Finders have been awarded temporary custody of the children until a court hearing next week.

Leon County Judge Victor Cawthon ruled in a closed hearing today that the four boys and two girls found Feb. 4 could stay here with women Finders members who identified themselves as their mothers until a final custody hearing Friday. Until then, the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services is to exercise formal custody of the children.

The children, ranging in age from 2 to 7, were taken into protective custody when their two adult male companions were arrested on child neglect charges.

County prosecutor C.L. Fordham objected to today's ruling, arguing that it was "premature at this point to give the children back to the mothers because of the many lingering questions of impact of [the Finders'] life style on the children."

Fordham said he was not yet sure if he would object during the Friday hearing to giving the mothers full custody.

Connie Ruggles, spokeswoman for the social services agency, said state law prohibited her from commenting, and Paula Walborsky, attorney for the women, did not return a call to the Associated Press.

Meanwhile, the two men arrested Feb. 4 remained jailed on child neglect charges. Douglas Ammerman, 27, and James Holwell, 23, are being held in lieu of \$10,000 bail each on one count of child neglect. Trials are scheduled for March 30 and 31.

The Washington Post  
2/28/87

*Answers*

# D.C. Police: Finders Odd, Not Criminal

## FBI, Virginia and Florida Expand Probes

*Post 2-10-87*

By Victoria Churchville  
and Marc Fisher  
Washington Post Staff Writers

A District police investigation begun in December into allegations of child abuse and satanic rituals involving the Finders, a group linked to six ragtag children found last week in Florida, has produced evidence that the practices of the group were odd but not criminal, D.C. Police Chief Maurice T. Turner Jr. said yesterday.

"The life style of the so-called Finders organization may differ from the societal norm, but so far the Metropolitan Police Department has not uncovered any evidence of criminal wrongdoing by members of the group," Turner said at a news conference. He added, however, that documents and records seized last week are still being reviewed.

But even as police in the District softened their statements about the Finders group, the FBI and police in Virginia and Florida widened their investigation into the activities of the Washington-based commune of 20 to 40 adults and seven children.

Two of the six children, whom police said they found dirty and hungry in a Tallahassee park with two well-dressed men, showed indications of possible sexual abuse, according to an affidavit filed in Madison County, Va., where the group has two farms.

The men, Douglas E. Ammerman, 27, and James Michael Holwell, 23, who gave police the name Michael Houlihan, were arrested and charged with six counts each of child abuse. Florida authorities said yesterday that the two men, who are in jail in lieu of \$100,000 cash bond, have refused to talk with police.

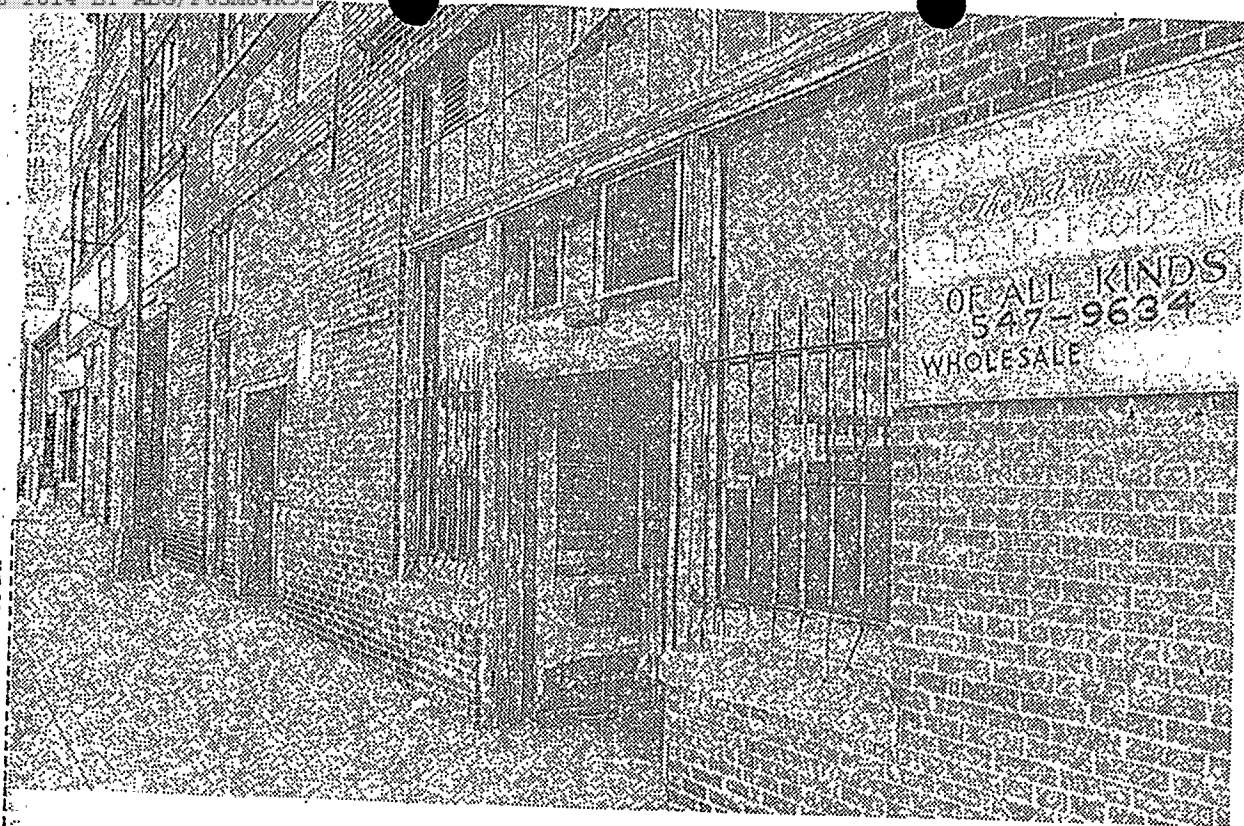
See CHILDREN, D5, Col. 4

And how many of us are frustrated when a phone call takes forever to be put through and do nothing? A man in New Delhi had a plan. After repeated attempts and delays to place a call to Bombay, he entered the phone exchange at midnight and threatened operators with a pistol if they did not put through the urgent call for him. He also ordered his bodyguard to beat up an operator because his call was delayed. When the press tried to call him for comment, they were unable to get through to the numbers listed

*The Washington Post*  
*2/10/87*

The bidding:  
South West North East  
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass  
2 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ Pass  
3 ♠ Pass 4 ♠ Pass  
Opening lead: Two of ♦

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A warehouse in Northeast Washington, believed to have been occupied by the Finders, a little-known cult. Associated Press

# Inquiry Spreads on 6 Children and Cult

By RICHARD HALLORAN  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 7 — Police officials here said today that six disheveled children found in Tallahassee, Fla., might be the offspring of members of a little-known cult, but the officials said they had not ruled out the possibility of kidnapping.

Capt. William White 3d, a spokesman for the District of Columbia Police Department, said, "At this point, it appears that those children are the children of members of this group." He was referring to members of a cult known as the Finders, who have occupied at least two buildings here.

But Captain White added, "We haven't ruled out any possibilities."

## Children Found in Florida

He declined to speculate on what the possibilities might be but other police officials said they included kidnapping or some type of international market for children.

The children, two girls and four boys, 2 to 6 years old, were discovered in a Tallahassee playground on Thursday. Two men, Douglas Edward Zimmerman, 27 years old, and Michael Houlihan, 28, were arrested in the case and charged with child abuse.

Subsequently, the police here obtained warrants to search a house in Northwest Washington and a warehouse in Northeast Washington, both believed to have been occupied by the Finders. Captain White said they had seized boxes of records, documents and computer programs.

"We have a very long, tedious pro-

cess of reviewing this material ahead of us," the captain said.

Detectives in the investigation said the review would require the weekend at least. The detectives said they had begun to doubt that child pornography was involved but that they had seen evidence that children were involved in rituals. They declined to comment on reports that the Finders were worshippers of the devil.

## Pet Food Spoon Wins An Invention Contest

WASHINGTON, Feb. 7 (AP) — A 6-year-old Oklahoma girl has come up with a solution to a problem that has vexed some pet owners for years: how to feed a cat or dog without having to wash the messy spoon afterward.

The solution devised by the girl, Suzanna Goodin, was to shape a pet cracker into an edible spoon that could be broken up into the pet's food after serving.

Her "edible pet food server" won her a grand prize today in an invention contest sponsored by The Weekly Reader, a school publication. More than 200,000 children participated in the contest.

Suzanna, a first-grader from Hydro, Okla., was cited for the best idea submitted by children in kindergarten through the fourth grade.

In neighboring Virginia, the authorities said they had completed their part in the investigation by searching five places in Madison County where members of the group were said to have occupied farms and homes.

Lieut. J. P. Henries of the Madison County Sheriff's Office said, "No obvious new evidence of criminal activity was found."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has also been called into the case. Police officials here suggested that whatever legal action might arise from the case would be in Federal rather than in local courts because it appeared that the children had been transported across state lines in possible violation of Federal laws.

Captain White said that the district police had been unable to identify the children or their parents. "We're trying to find the parents," he said.

Captain White said that people who might be related to the children were also being sought but he declined to give details.

The Police Department spokesman said that no further arrests were expected. "At this stage," he said, "we have not uncovered anything that would cause us to anticipate arrests, at least not in the near future."

With an air of frustration perhaps reflecting the bafflement of the police department, however, he added, "No one knows what tomorrow holds."

Police officials also raised the question of whether children other than the six found in Florida might be involved in the case.

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# Police Link Cult to Case Of Unidentified Children

By JON NORDHEIMER

Special to The New York Times

MIAMI, Feb. 6 — The authorities in several states today sought to identify six young children who the police said were apparently taken from their parents by two Washington, D.C., men and enlisted in what was described as a bizarre cult of devil worshippers.

Known to one another by such names as "Benjamin Franklin," "John Paul Pope" and "Honeybee," the children were taken into protective custody Thursday by the police in Tallahassee, Fla., after they were found, unwashed and hungry, in a city park. The children, ranging in age from 2 to 7 years, were with two men driving a van with Virginia license plates.

Acting on information supplied by detectives in Tallahassee, the police in Washington today searched a house and a warehouse in the northwest section of the District of Columbia, seizing photographs and other documents that one source described as "consistent with a satanic cult," including a photograph of a mutilated animal.

## No Clues to Their Identities

The band of children has baffled the police, who said the case resembled something more like a Pied Piper story than a tale of the occult.

Some of the children told investigators they had not seen their parents since Christmas and had been traveling with the men since then. Other children said that one of the men, Michael Houlihan, 28 years old, was their father, but Mr. Houlihan denied it without

providing any clues to their identities

quent visitors, both Haitians and gate of the villa. There are fre- garden," said the guard at the and that, when he walks in this "Sometimes we discuss this

rossa. Saab 900 or his red Ferrari Testa- either behind the wheel of his

quent day trips, often to Cannes, of time out and around, taking tre- But Mr. Duvalier spends a lot

bile to a reporter outside the villa. from the window of his automo- anybody," Mr. Duvalier shouted

will give the slightest interview to "There is no possibility that I

La Mohamedia. Cannes in a luxurious villa called Mediterranean village near

Duvalier, his wife, Michele, and their two children live in this

Hunt said. "Adults are encouraged to join this group and one of the stipulations of joining this group is that they give up the rights of their children."

Police sources in Washington said the trail of the men led to a rural Virginia community in Madison County, about two hours southwest of the nation's capital, apparently a lead provided by documents found today. "It may turn out to be one property, it may turn out to be more," said Lieut. M. G. Millner of the Virginia state police who added that the police would to check the area soon.

In the searches, police officers seized large boxes of documents, records and

## The two suspects are charged with aggravated child abuse.

equipment, including computer programming material.

Twenty-seven computer storage disks were also found, along with rotting food, in the blue 1980 Dodge van driven by the suspects when they were taken into custody in Tallahassee with the children.

Witnesses there told investigators that they saw two other men and children in a second van make contact with the first group in the park. The witnesses said they drove away before the police arrived.

## Children Rewarded With Food

The children told investigators in Tallahassee that they had been on the road for weeks, camping out at night. The older children reported that they were rewarded with food for doing "good things" but that the nature of what was expected was not described.

Their daily ration of food consisted of oranges, bananas and raw potatoes, they told the police.

Based on information provided by the children, they were tentatively identified as Mary Houlihan, 7 years old; Max Livingstone, 6; Honeybee Evans, 3; Benjamin Franklin, 3; John Paul Pope Houlihan, 2, and B.B., a 2-year-old boy.

MIAMI OF LEISURE

*Handwritten:* The New York Times  
2/7/87

*Amman*

## 2 Held in Child Abuse Linked to Satanic Cult

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP)—Two men arrested after being seen in a park with six children dressed in tatters were held Friday on child abuse charges, and police said the men may be part of an international satanic cult whose members give up their children.

Some of the children told police they had not seen their parents since before Christmas.

"They evidently have come from such sheltered existences that they had no concept of what a telephone was, or TV or anything like that," said Scott Hunt, a spokesman for the Tallahassee Police Department.

The children, ages 2 to 6, may have been given up by their parents so the parents could join a satanic cult in Washington, D.C., authorities in Florida said.

### Police Tipped Off

Police were alerted Wednesday by anonymous callers concerned because the men were dressed in coats and ties while the children, unwashed and insect-bitten, were playing in tattered clothes at Myers Park, a downtown playground.

Upon questioning after their arrest Wednesday, the men said the children were being "weaned" from their mothers in Washington. They said they were taking the children to Mexico to start a school for brilliant children. They denied any blood relationship with the children and refused to answer other questions.

"We don't know what we've got. All we have is six children, and we don't know where they came from," Hunt said.

The oldest child said the children had never been to school. They had been traveling for several days or weeks, she said, although she did not know where they had been.

Medical exams showed that one child had been sexually abused, Hunt said.

Police identified the men as Douglas Edward Ammerman, 27, and Michael Houlihan, 28, and said they were believed to be from the Washington area. The two were charged Thursday with one count of child abuse. They appeared in court Friday and were jailed on \$100,000 bail each.

*The Los Angeles Times*  
*2/17/87*

87-225

# 2 Men Arrested Traveling in Van With 6 Children

POST 3-6-87

By John Ward Anderson  
and Victoria Churchville  
Washington Post Staff Writers

Two men believed to have Washington-area ties who were traveling with six hungry and disheveled children in a van with Virginia license plates were arrested in Tallahassee, Fla., and charged with child abuse, police in the Florida capital reported last night.

D.C. police, armed with search warrants, seized documents and records from two locations in the city last night as part of the investigation of the incident, which involves six children—two girls and four boys—whose ages range from 2 to 6. The children have not identified themselves.

Based on information obtained from Tallahassee authorities, a D.C. police spokesman told a news conference last night that "the children are in doubt as to who they are."

However, D.C. police said last night that no children of the ages listed are listed as missing from the District.

Police in Tallahassee said the two men, picked up in a city park there Wednesday, carried homemade identification cards that listed them as Doug Ammerman and Michael Houlihan.

Little other information was available about the men. Tallahassee police Lt. George Creamer said the two have refused to talk to police. They were ordered held under \$100,000 bond each after a hearing yesterday.

An Associated Press report said that no record of the Virginia tags on the van could be found.

In addition to being unable to identify themselves, the children apparently were

See CHILDREN, B9, Col. 3

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White said, however, that police have not been able to determine where the two suspects were from, and have not been able to tell whether they are from the Washington metropolitan area.

The Wash. Post  
3/6/87

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SERVICES DIVISION, METROPOLITAN POLICE  
DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D.C.~~

87-225

POST 3-4-87

# Finders to Sell D.C. Property, Move to Florida

A member of the Finders has announced the communal group is selling its Washington properties, which include two apartment buildings and a warehouse, and moving to Tallahassee, Fla., where authorities are holding two men linked to the group.

The men were arrested Feb. 4 and charged with child abuse after they were found in a Florida park

with six children, whom Tallahassee police described as dirty, hungry and insect-bitten.

Douglas E. Ammerman, 27, and James Michael Howell, 23, remain in a Tallahassee jail in lieu of \$10,000 bond each. A judge has reduced the bond for the misdemeanor charges from \$100,000 for Ammerman and from \$101,000 for Howell.

One of the children remains in full custody of the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. A judge ordered the agency to share custody of the five other children with four members of the group who say they are the children's mothers.

"We look for signs and symbols, and Florida's sending us signs that they want us here," R. Gardner

HAILMAN, EUGENE F.  
On Tuesday, March 3,  
EUGENE F. HAILMAN  
beloved husband of  
father of Melva Cooper  
F. Hallman Jr. of Ch  
Hallman of Spotsylvan  
White-Hurst of North C  
Florida. Also survived  
Memorial services will b  
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33 W. Columbia St.,  
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ON FUNERAL HOME  
HANSON, JACQUELINE  
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ARALSON, POLLY G.

The Washington Post  
3/4/87



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UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

Two members of the Finders organization, Doug Ammerman, left, and James Holwell, leave courthouse in Tallahassee, Fla., yesterday after their bond was reduced to \$5,000. They are charged with child abuse after being arrested in the company of six unkempt children in a Tallahassee park.

*The Washington Post  
3/6/87*

87-22

# Mothers Win Custody of 3 Older Children in Finders Case Remain in Fla. Care

By Lawrence Feinberg  
Washington Post Staff Writer

A Florida judge yesterday awarded full custody of three children, found last month in a van in a Tallahassee park to their mothers, who are members of the Washington-based Finders commune, but ruled that three older children should remain under state supervision.

Only hours later, one of the Finders' leaders released a statement saying the futurist group was dissolving, possibly as a result of the custody battle.

Ruling after four days of testimony, Leon County Circuit Judge Victor Cawthon rejected a state motion that the three children, aged 2 and 3, should be declared "dependent" because they had been "abused, neglected, or abandoned" by their parents, according to a lawyer for three of the women.

Cawthon ruled that the three others, aged 4 to 7, were dependent, primarily because their education was being neglected, but he allowed two of them to remain temporarily with their mothers in Tallahassee.

The sixth child, whose mother has not stayed in Tallahassee to seek his return, remains in foster care. Cawthon said he would make a final ruling on arrangements for the three dependent children at a hearing March 23.

The decisions, announced in a closed court session, were disclosed by Paula Walborsky, who represented three of the mothers at the hearing, and confirmed by Cawthon in a telephone interview.

"I'm absolutely delighted with the outcome," Walborsky said. "The court found there was no abuse or abandonment."

"Ultimately, the state only pressed the issue of neglect, that the Finders' life style was inherently detrimental to the psychological

See FINDERS, C2, Col. 5

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87-22

## Fla. Judge Sends 2 Finders Children To Foster Homes

A Florida judge has declared two children of members of the Finders commune to be dependents of the state. Judge Victor Cawthon last week ordered two children who grew up in the Washington-based Finders group placed in foster homes.

The judge's ruling was the final act in the state's attempt to sort through the affairs of the secretive group that found itself the subject of intense public scrutiny in February, when police in Tallahassee received an anonymous phone call about two well-dressed men and six disheveled children in a local park.

Within hours, police in Florida, Virginia and the District, joined by the FBI and even Interpol, were on the case. Authorities raided the Finders' homes, confiscated records and photographs, and publicly speculated whether the group was involved in satanism, child abuse or pornography. While none of the more lurid possibilities was confirmed, the Finders proved to be an avowedly private and elusive group of about 20 people, many of whom had lived together since the late 1960s.

Public interest in the Finders quickly centered on their unusual child-rearing philosophy, in which youngsters were raised communally and were left largely to their own devices.

The two Finders in Florida with children of other group members were held in jail for six weeks, then released when a judge dismissed child abuse charges. In March, another judge returned four of the children to their mothers, who had retained a Florida lawyer.

But at the direction of Marion Pettie, the group's founder and intellectual leader, two mothers, Kristin Knauth and Pat Livingston, refused to hire a lawyer, argue for the return of their children or even remain in Florida.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

James Madison University professor J. Barkley Rosser and his wife, Marina Vchershnyaya, share a toast after being married May 24 in an outdoor ceremony in Rockingham County, Va. The two met in the Soviet Union in 1984, fell in love, but were separated in August of that year after registering with the Soviet government to be married. This year Soviet officials allowed Vchershnyaya to leave the U.S.S.R.

They said Pettie told them that since the court had the best interests of the children in mind, they should not participate in the judicial process, according to Paula Walborsky, a Tallahassee lawyer who represented the other Finders mothers.

"Those children should have been returned to their mothers, but they didn't go through the system," Walborsky said. "The state felt these mothers had abandoned their children when they returned to Washington. I saw them with their children, and I know all these women love their children."

Connie Ruggles, spokeswoman for the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, confirmed that the two children, Ben Knauth, 4, and Max Livingston, 6, are in foster homes. She said their cases will be reviewed every six months. "The judge felt circumstances

were not right to reunite them with their family," Ruggles said.

Cawthon had closed the hearing to the public, as is his option in Leon County.

Walborsky said the state presented no evidence that the children were abused or neglected, and the judge declared the children wards of the state for "educational reasons." Ruggles declined to comment on the hearing.

George Wisnovsky of the Jacksonville FBI office said the agency "is no longer investigating the Finders."

The Finders, who announced the dissolution of their group in March, are still together and living in California, according to several people who were in contact with them in Florida. Neither Walborsky nor Ruggles has spoken to group members in recent weeks.

— Marc Fisher

*Wright Post  
6/1/87*

87-225

# Two Finders Released; Abuse Charges Dropped

Post 3-18-87

By Douglas Stevenson  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Two members of a Washington-based communal group known as the Finders, arrested last month on child abuse charges in Florida, were released from jail yesterday after the charges were dismissed.

Douglas Edward Ammerman, 27, and James Michael Holwell, 23, were released after a Leon County Circuit Court hearing. A move for dismissal of the charges on the grounds of insufficient evidence had been filed by their counsel, authorities said.

Ammerman and Holwell were arrested Feb. 4 in Tallahassee after police there received an anonymous telephone call reporting that two "well-dressed men" were "supervising" six disheveled and hungry children in a local park, Tallahassee police said at the time.

Each man was charged with one count of misdemeanor child abuse, and the children, ages 2 to 7, whose

mothers were members of the Finders, were examined for signs of abuse and remanded to the custody of the state of Florida. Holwell was also charged with resisting arrest without violence.

The investigation involved D.C. police, who raided a Northeast warehouse owned by the Finders, as well as Virginia and federal authorities. Initially, there were widespread reports of possible involvement by group members in child pornography and satanic rituals. Authorities later said that these reports were unfounded and were attributable in part to confusion over the group members' unusual life style. Members said recently the Finders are disbanding.

Michael Minerva, the assistant public defender who represented Ammerman and Holwell, said he made the motion to dismiss the case "on the grounds that there was not sufficient evidence" to try it. Judge George Reynolds agreed.

See FINDERS, D9, Col. 3

arrest. He said police testimony indicated that Holwell "just seemed to have fainted" at the time of the arrest and that there was no way of telling if Holwell had faked the fainting spell.

Because Holwell showed "no active resistance," the prosecution could not press the charge, Fordham said.

Last week Leon County Circuit Court Judge Victor Cawthon awarded custody of three of the youngest children to the mothers. Two of the other children were declared dependent but were allowed to remain with their mothers in Tallahassee, and another child, whose mother was not present for the custody hearing, remains in foster care.

The Washington Post  
3/18/87