

**By Lori Pankonin**

*Co-Publisher*

My heart has always ached when seeing pictures or reading stories of missing children. What devastation!!! How could you go on from day to day with that fear of the unknown? Are they alive? Are they scared? Will we ever find them?

Well, Saturday gave me a whole new perspective on that aching gut feeling of sheer panic when we were missing our granddaughter, Tayvin.

It had been a glorious action-packed day since Brooke and Jeff dropped off their three darling cherubs, Austin, 7 (or 7 ½ as he would say); Tayvin, 4; and Preslin 19 months.

A super bubbly bubble bath for the girls was the immediate request in store while Austin watched Iron Man 2. Baking cupcakes, going to the library for movies, enjoying the swimming pool and playground, visiting at the Heights, meals, snacks, naps for Preslin. Never a dull moment.

We had moved outside in the evening air where Austin was hitting golf balls, getting tips from Grandpa. Preslin was in and out of her little orange car, exclaiming, "Bye," with a big wave each time she shut the door. Austin had fetched his golf balls, returning with a stray dog. Tayvin immediately befriended the dog which brought great caution from me as you just never know how an unfamiliar dog will react to children.

It seemed quite friendly and became very interested in the smell coming from the grill.

Tayvin is constantly singing with great gusto in her tiny girly girl fashion, dancing around like the princess characters she sees in her movies. I was in and out, carrying goods to the table for supper, checking the meat, etc., when I asked where Tayvin went. Had she followed that dog out of the yard?

Who knows what the exact course of actions were at that point because we were running around frantically yelling her name. Inside, outside, around the whole yard, down the street. The dog came back to the yard so she wasn't with her.

Russ got on his bike to go around the block. Our friendly neighborhood State Patrolman Dan was grilling and became aware of our search for a little girl. He kindly dropped everything to get in his pickup to help.

Heaven forbid, had a stranger passing by taken her?

Bless his heart. Austin was praying out loud as we searched and yelled. What an impressive strong Christian upbringing he's had to immediately turn to the Lord in a time of need. My prayers were also constant between yells of "TAYVIN!!"

I realized that little Preslin was sitting at the picnic table by herself eating pickles and we were leaving her unattended, so I called my mom to come over to keep an eye on her.

I went back in the house to check in every room and there she was. She was walking slowly out of the guest room with a big grin on her face. Oh my gosh!! Did she think this was a game? She later said she was looking for her shoes. Hmmm???

I tried to exclaim how scared we were and that she can't do that and exclaimed that even the police were looking for her. Then I hugged her and held her tight, only for a moment, as I went to yell to tell everyone that the lost was found.

Who knows how long our little escapade lasted. Probably only minutes. Russ's face was white as a ghost. We were both shaking and literally felt ill. I started over on the hamburgers although that incident was a sure appetite killer. Who felt like eating? The dog ended up getting treated to a couple of the overcooked burgers. I know that feeding a stray dog only brings them back but I was rejoicing at that point.

Our night's ventures continued with a trip to the golf course (imagine the five of us on a cart), then a quick stop at the playground in the dark with the light rain coming down. Praise the Lord that we could all be together and that I could call Mommy and Daddy to tell the story AFTER their precious daughter was found.

Thank you, Lord. My heart goes out to anyone whose search continues. God bless you!!