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Pair seeking teen lost in Hippieland - Former Newsweek reporter haunted by Flint runaway in 1967 article

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FLINT - It was the end of 1967's storied Summer of Love when Newsweek reporter **Bruce Porter** met the Flint runaway with streaky blond hair and spacey blue eyes.

Seventeen-year-old Marcy wasn't unlike many of the hippies who helped shape the era: Sprinkling sentences with "groovy" and "dig it." Looking to belong. High on drugs.

The first and last time Porter saw the Flint teen was at a coffee shop in New York City, where she told him her story: Her troubled relationship with her father. Her life with a 28-year-old drug pusher. Getting hooked on acid and STP. More than 20 moves and ending up in New York's East Village. Begging for food and worse.

Now, more than 43 years later, Porter is searching for her.

The retired journalist, who featured the girl in Newsweek's stirring Oct. 30, 1967, cover story, "Trouble in Hippieland," arrived in Flint on Friday to collect clues. He was accompanied by filmmaker Dan Loewenthal, who hopes to turn the search into a documentary.

"I've always wondered what happened to her," Porter, 72, of Greenwich Village, N.Y., said while seated at a table Friday at the Flint Public Library amid piles of yearbooks, phone directories and notes. "I want to know if she made it."

The former Columbia University professor never forgot about the young woman who became one of his biggest stories when he was a 28-year-old reporter.

Every year, he'd share his notes from the interview with his Columbia students, who were asked to write their own stories about Marcy.

"She stayed on my mind all these years," he said. "I had a long list of things I wanted to do when I retired. This was at the top."

But there is little to go on. He doesn't even know Marcy's last name.

He has an approximate birth year, a list of 20 to 30 possible old phone numbers and scattered details about Marcy's family.

Using that sketchy information, Porter and Loewenthal were set to spend the weekend trying to find any details, places or people from her life.

For Porter, a married father of three grown daughters, it's also a personal quest to somewhat make amends to the woman, who would be roughly 60 years old today.

Marcy wasn't happy with the article he wrote about her.

On a radio interview that aired on station WNEW the week after the Newsweek story ran,

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an angry Marcy told an interviewer that Porter didn't try to mask any of the details of her life and worried it would cause her family - who believed she was working at Macy's - heartache and grief.

"I felt terrible about it, and it just kept eating at me," Porter said. "I was a young journalist, and I wanted a good story."

During the same live radio broadcast, called "A Child Again," Marcy also called her home in Flint and had an emotional conversation with her parents.

"I love you both, but I can't come home right now. You want me to be things I'm not," the raspy-voiced, strung-out teen said through tears on the show. "I'm not gone forever. I'm very happy."

She promised her mother she would write when she and her friends got to Columbus, Mo., where they planned to live in a friend's bus and get "real jobs."

During the interview, she also told late radio host Steve Young that she "dug" drugs and that she had found a happy family of hippies.

Young, who died several years ago, was the last person known to have seen her.

After letting Marcy and some friends stay at his apartment, Young dropped them off at a ramp at the New Jersey Turnpike, where they planned to hitchhike to Missouri. They hoped ultimately to make it to San Francisco's hippie mecca, Haight-Ashbury.

The radio program "A Child Again" was distributed later through CBS to many school districts in the country as a lesson on running away.

The recording also left behind a potentially big clue.

Porter hired several computer experts to analyze the phone tones from Marcy's call home to produce possible old phone numbers.

He's hoping one of them matches a number in a directory and provides a lead. Maybe her last name, her old neighborhood or even people who knew something about the family.

"Every time I've heard this story, I've always wanted to meet Marcy. You hear her voice on the radio interview, and it's so compelling," said Loewenthal, a friend of Porter's. "It's an interesting story about a particularly compelling time, and it's also a personal story of Bruce's, something he's carried with him and is so passionate about."

"It has many social and political and ethical overtones. It was a time that in many ways helped form who we all became."

Marcy lived through one of the most revolutionary periods in history.

Woodstock. The anti-war movement. Drugs.

And an alarming increase in runaways, who received widespread attention after the 1967 slayings of rich-girl-turned-runaway Linda Fitzpatrick and her hippie boyfriend, Groovy Hutchinson, in New York's infamous Village Plaza Hotel.

"I was sent down to find an equivalent of Linda Fitzpatrick, a young woman who had had a lot of trouble after running away from home," Porter remembered of his assignment. "I found Marcy."

The teenager shared stories of her life with him, including childhood memories of her father killing her pet turtle and tearing up her watermelon garden as punishment.

She told him how she packed her suitcase with clothes and records just before her 17th birthday and hitchhiked to Detroit, where she joined up with a motorcycle gang called the "Outlaws."

She had horrifying tales.

There was the time she fell out of a car on a Detroit freeway, dislocating her leg, then traveling across the Canadian border for hospital treatment.

She got beaten up on the streets. She became a pseudo-servant for two men who let her

stay with them. She got pregnant and had a \$200 abortion performed by a woman not much older than she was.

She missed her mom.

"I know every other word I say is drugs," she said in Porter's article. "They take away the bad things."

Loewenthal, 61, has worked on several films, including "Silver Bullet" and "Red Scorpion," along with many independent films. He teaches film at Montclair State University.

Loewenthal said he expects to visit Flint again.

"With documentaries, finding the real story is always a challenge. You're not dealing with a script," he said. "It's an adventure. The story won't really start until we know what happened to Marcy."

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