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Hoaxes snarl search for boy

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As about 300 investigators worked long hours Saturday in a desperate race against time to find a Birmingham boy missing since Wednesday, the case was muddled by what police called hoax ransom demands.

The most persistent of the apparent hoaxes was attributed to a Detroit youth who twice demanded money — getting a package of shredded paper on his first try and arrested on the second.

Police said the youth had nothing to do with the suspected Birmingham kidnaping but planned to charge him with extortion.

Several other ransom demands were received by telephone, police said. All were dismissed by police as phony and coming from hoaxers or opportunists.

In other developments Saturday:

- Police enlisted the aid of nearly 1,100 Oakland County mail carriers in the all-out search.

- Two Bloomfield Township boys told police they had been approached three weeks ago by two men in a car similar to the one driven by a man reportedly seen talking to 11-year-old Timothy King on the same night as that of his disappearance from a shopping area in downtown Birmingham.

- The man believed seen talking to Timothy

is now regarded as a prime suspect in the presumed kidnaping — not just as a witness sought for questioning. (A composite sketch of the suspect is on Page 8A.)

Birmingham police had received more than 600 telephoned tips by Saturday afternoon, most of them apparently sparked by a \$25,000 reward offered by the city of Birmingham in the case.

They included what State Police Detective Sgt. Joseph Krease called "several good solid tips."

The grueling police effort had investigators from dozens of agencies working as long as 16 hours, taking a few hours off for a nap and then going right back to work.

The grinding urgency of the investigation is to find the boy alive.

What they most dread is that the next break in the case might be finding Timothy's body.

In several of the six recent unsolved murders involving Oakland County children or young persons slain in the county, the kidnaper apparently has kept the victims alive for several days before killing them and dumping their bodies in isolated spots.

Police think Timothy's suspected kidnaper may be the same man who abducted and later killed at least three of the victims.

The task force includes Birmingham's

35-man force, State Police troopers and detectives from as far away as Grand Rapids, Oakland sheriff's deputies and officers from several other Oakland County communities.

What appeared to be the most promising ransom call came Friday night from a man who demanded that \$25,000 be left at a spot near Hamilton and Collingwood in northwest Detroit.

Detroit police staked out the site after leaving a bag of shredded paper at the designated spot. But a man drove by in a car, grabbed the bag, drove off and eluded the officers.

The same man called Saturday, identi-

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Kidnap ...from Page One

fied himself by the code name "Junebug," and said, "I don't want that kind of paper — I want money."

Police set up a second drop. This time the 18-year-old Detroit was nabbed by Birmingham and Detroit officers.

Police said he will be charged with extortion. They said he had nothing to do with Timothy's disappearance, and told them he "got the idea from television."

Police briefed postal supervisors Friday and Saturday with descriptions of Timothy, the kidnap suspect and the suspect's car. The information was passed on to every mail carrier in Oakland County.

"We're familiar with the area and we would notice anything unusual," said Bob Moyer, a Birmingham postman for 20 years. "Everyone in the Post Office is just happy to be able to help."

It was a mail carrier who discovered the body of Kristine Mihelich, also believed to be the victim of an abduction-slaying, in Franklin Village two months ago.

The FBI is not taking part officially in the present case, but offered to check out any tips leading to persons in other states.

Police want to question three young children seen in the Chatham supermarket parking lot at Maple and Poppleton at the same time Timothy was believed seen talking to the man Wednesday night.

"They may have seen something our witness didn't," Sgt. Krease said.

The witness told detectives she saw Timothy talking to a husky, soft-voiced man in his late 20's or early 30's, standing beside a late model blue Gremlin.

The man was fair-skinned with dark brown hair in a shag cut, and wore a rust-colored sports coat and dark trousers.

Meanwhile, two Bloomfield Township brothers, aged 9 and 11, told police they were approached by two men about three weeks ago behind their home in the Maple-Lahser area.

The men got out of a late model blue Gremlin and accused the boys of throwing snowballs at their car, they said.

Both the boys and their parents think the men were trying to lure the boys into the car.

One of the men said, "Don't pick them up, they're too little," one of the brothers related.

"Then they both got in the car and took off," the boy said.

He said the driver was white, in his 30's,



Composite drawing of man seen talking to a boy in a Birmingham parking lot

with long black curly hair. He was wearing a black leather jacket and a brown cap. The other man was in his 20's, had short brown hair and was wearing a heavy blue jacket and brown trousers.

Glenn Watson, chief of special operations for the Oakland sheriff's department, said investigators have been staying on the job until they are ready to drop.

"We're going to stick with it until we make an arrest," he said. "We have a job to do. We're gonna get this guy off the street."

"It's got to the point where we all go to bed thinking about it, and then wake up still thinking about it. We work until we can't go on any longer."

At least 50 of the calls came from persons who thought they recognized the composite picture of the man seen talking to the boy. The picture was published in newspapers and shown on television Friday.

Persons named by tipsters as possible suspects include a priest, schoolteachers, several doctors, a state legislator and several television newsmen.

Krease said police in several other states are cooperating by checking out persons with records of sex crimes to find out if they could be in Michigan.

Timothy went out Wednesday night, bought a candy bar in the Hunter-Maple Pharmacy in downtown Birmingham about 8:30 p.m. and never returned home.