



JENNI GIRTMAN / Staff

Tara Grinstead was a teacher at Irwin County High School when she went missing from her home in 2005.

## Grinstead: Reward offered in unsolved case

Continued from D1

A popular teacher at Irwin County High School in Ocilla and a Hawkinsville native, Grinstead was an experienced pageant contestant and a three-time Miss Tifton; she spent the last day she was seen helping other contestants do their hair and makeup for the Miss Sweet Potato Pageant in nearby Fitzgerald. That night, at the cookout, she received a call on her cellphone, "the last contact we're aware of," Rothwell said.

Known for her punctuality, her fellow teachers knew something was seriously amiss when Grinstead did not appear at school the following Monday.

In her eighth year of teaching high school, she was pursuing a doctoral degree in U.S. History at Valdosta State University and, according to her older sister Anita Gattis, had ambitions of becoming of school principal or perhaps teaching at the college level.

Investigators found her cellphone in her house, along with her dog and cat, both unharmed. Her purse and car keys were gone but her white Mitsubishi was in the driveway, unlocked.

There were no conclusive signs of a struggle inside the house, although a broken lamp was found in her bedroom.

"We believe had there been an altercation, there would be more signs than a broken lamp," said GBI spokesman John Bankhead. "Her credit cards haven't been used since she went missing, but no contact was ever made with any family member."

"It was uncharacteristic of her not to contact anybody. That's why it doesn't look good."

Investigators have looked at the possibility she was forced at gunpoint from her home, but have no evidence to support that theory, Bankhead said. "We don't know what happened to her ... she didn't travel in a crowd that would have made her a high-risk victim. She wasn't involved in the drug culture or the nightclub culture."

"Most of her time was devoted to education, and the risk factors we find in many missing person cases were not there."

The GBI has interviewed "anyone that we could associate with her, including past boyfriends and acquaintances," said Rothwell. The case file, "adding up all the contacts of people who knew her and the research and interviews involved," is more than 5 feet thick, he said.

"We're not just sitting by the phone, waiting for it to ring," said Bankhead.



"We're generating our own leads, and the major way to do that is to reassess everything we've done to see what we've overlooked."

Rothwell said Grinstead's relationship with an Army Ranger who had served in Iraq had broken up "some time previously and had left her distraught." The former boyfriend has been questioned by the GBI, as has a former student who once broke into her house. Neither has been linked to her disappearance, he said.

"The key word is 'evidence,' and a lot of people confuse 'suspicion' with evidence," Rothwell said.

Tara's mother, Faye Grinstead of Hawkinsville, said the boy who broke into her daughter's home "had an obsession of some kind about her."

She said her daughter always let her know when she returned home safely from Valdosta and her night graduate classes.

"She knew I was a worrier, so she always called that she was OK."

Tara's father, Billy Grinstead, is an executive in Birmingham with Liberty National Insurance, which has put up \$50,000 of the reward fund.

His wife Connie, Tara's stepmother, said she still gets calls of possible sightings and keeps in frequent contact with the GBI.

"Some feel she just ran away, but I don't think so," Connie Grinstead said. "She was planning a future, and she was the kind to always think ahead. There were too many things going for her."

Tara's stepmother said she had a call once suggesting the young woman had been spotted at a [Birmingham] truck stop. "We talked to people on every shift, who described a very attractive girl with long brown hair ... it turned out not to be her."

"People might think that would be annoying, but I'm grateful that people are willing to call. ... We get very sad and discouraged, but we have not completely shut the door on hope."

"Whatever happened to ..." is a weekly feature catching up with people in the news. Are you wondering about the fate or fortune of former newsmakers? Tell us who and e-mail dgibson@ajc.com. Please put "whatever happened to" in the subject line.

### ACWORTH

# Claude Miller, 104, sawmill master and proud moonshiner

By KAY POWELL  
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Claude Miller started his day with some fried streak o' lean or fatback and a homemade buttered biscuit with brown sugar on it.

Then he set out for a day working at a sawmill, making moonshine and bootlegging on the side.

Mr. Miller's schoolhouse was the sawmill. His education was how to take a one-hand buck saw, fell a tree and cut off every single limb till it was smooth as butter.

"You could rub the wood and not get a splinter," said his daughter-in-law Betty Miller of Acworth.

Though he had no formal education, Mr. Miller insisted his four children attend school, Mrs. Miller said. Two generations followed him into the sawmill business.

"They took my son out with them and had him running the loader at 4," she said. "He's 42 now and still in the business."

Making moonshine, particularly apple brandy and peach brandy, is another craft Mr. Miller passed on to his children and grandchildren.

"He was only in jail one time," his daughter-in-law said. "They blew his still up in 1965. But he didn't go to jail for that. It was a different time he was in jail, for bootlegging."

Georgians have made moonshine since the 1700s, and at times it was a cottage industry, according to The New Georgia Encyclopedia. Dawsonville even has a festival to celebrate moonshining.

Mr. Miller handcrafted every piece of his still, which he kept hidden in Cherokee County until it was blown up and ended his big-time moonshine days,



Family photo / 2006

Claude Miller was still "busting firewood" last December. An expert at checkers, he was as wily playing the game as he was at eluding revenue agents for half his life.

but not his will.

"Oh, Lord, he would do it today if he could," Mrs. Miller said. Just recently, he wanted to make a run to Ellijay to buy apples to make brandy, she said.

Since his still was destroyed, he limited himself to home brewing as a hobby at the legal limit.

"He would do it just to prove he could still do it," she said.

The funeral for Claude Richard Miller, 104, who died at his Acworth residence Thursday, is 11 a.m. today at Medford-Peden Funeral Home.

Mr. Miller's birth was recorded in the family Bible as 1900, but Social Security says it was 1903 so the family goes along with that, his daughter-

in-law said. He moved from North Carolina to Cherokee County at 9. Eight years ago, his wife of 76 years died at 98 and he moved in with Mrs. Miller and her husband, Edward Miller.

"Last December he was still busting firewood. He had his own splitter," Mrs. Miller said. "He was doing that until a month ago. My daughter or I would be out in the yard with him."

He was as wily playing checkers as he was at eluding revenue agents for half his life. "He played on the front porch or out in the front yard where he had built a checker table out of a stump," Mrs. Miller said.

"He would take four or five hours to play one game. He'd

think, 'If I move here, then he's going to move there.' He really studied those checkers."

He studied his money, too. "He didn't go to school. He couldn't read or write. He could sign his little X. But, he was a smart man. He could count his money," she said.

"He didn't forget if you owed him a penny. He knew his money."

While he earned the money, it was his wife who was the saver, Mrs. Miller said. "He loved to give money away. If he tried to give you money and you wouldn't take it, he would cry."

Survivors include another son, Troy Miller of Acworth; a daughter, Christine Tinsley of Acworth; 14 grandchildren; and several great-grandchildren.

### DEATHS / FUNERALS

**Our policy:** The Atlanta Journal-Constitution strives to make this list a complete record of deaths in the metro area and of selected deaths elsewhere. Please ask your funeral home or cremation society to call us at 404-526-5342, or fax us at 404-526-7517. These listings are free. For a Family-Placed Death Notice, for which there is a charge, have your funeral home contact our paid notice department at 404-526-5271.

#### ON AJC.COM

Compelling life stories every day. Find news obituaries and family-placed death notices from the past 30 days, send or read condolences online and search obituary archives.

#### ATLANTA

**FRANK C. DUNHAM**, 93, died Saturday. Graveside service, 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Arlington Memorial Park; H.M. Patterson & Son, Spring Hill.  
**RACHEL FEINBERG FRIEDMAN**, 87, died Sunday. Graveside service, 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Greenwood Cemetery; Dressler's Jewish Funeral Care.

#### BARTOW COUNTY

**GLADYS FLOWERS PRICE**, 86, of Cartersville died Friday. Funeral, 1 p.m. Tuesday, Owen Funeral Home.

#### CARROLL COUNTY

**OREON BUTLER WYSNER**, 82, of Bowdon died Saturday. Funeral, 1 p.m. today, Liberty Baptist Church; Rainwater Funeral Home.

#### CLAYTON COUNTY

**JULIA S. LONGNECKER**, 62, of Riverdale died Saturday. Funeral, 11 a.m. Wednesday, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jonesboro; Horis A. Ward, Tara Chapel.

#### COBB COUNTY

**RICHARD TATE BENNETT**, 60, of Marietta died Saturday. Memorial service, 7 p.m. today, Hanley-Shelton, Marietta.  
**ELEANOR M. CONNER**, 96, of Marietta died June 6. The memorial service was Saturday; Winkenhofers Pine Ridge Funeral Home.  
**VERA GEIGER**, 89, of Powder Springs died Friday. Funeral, 11 a.m. today, Revival Baptist Church; Bellamy's Powder Springs Funeral Home.

**GEORGE EMERSON MAIFORTH**, 88, of Kennesaw died Friday. A private service is planned; Winkenhofers Pine Ridge Funeral Home.

**LINDA LEE O'BRIEN**, 59, of Fairfield Bay, Ark., formerly of Marietta, died Thursday. The funeral was Sunday; Roller-McNutt Funeral Home, Clinton, Ark.

**BILLIE HOWARD PARKS JR.**, 44, of Kennesaw died Thursday. Memorial service, 2 p.m. Tuesday, Winkenhofers Pine Ridge Funeral Home.

#### COWETA COUNTY

**WILLIAM ALBERT LYLE JR.**, 67, of Newnan died Saturday. Funeral, 4 p.m. Tuesday, McKoon Funeral Home.

#### DeKALB COUNTY

**ANNETTE L. BAKER**, 42, of Decatur died. Funeral, 1 p.m. today, Levett Funeral Home; Waverly Hall Funeral Home.  
**MARY LOU BRYAN HUTCHINS**, 86, of Lithonia died Friday. Funeral, 11 a.m. today, Wages & Sons Funeral Home, Stone Mountain.

#### DOUGLAS COUNTY

**JEFFERY LANE MARKELL**, 33, of Winston died Friday. Funeral, 11 a.m. Tuesday, Couch-Garner & Cole Funeral Home.  
**VIRGINIA S. SLATE**, 74, of Winston died Saturday. Funeral, 2 p.m. Tuesday, Tabernacle Baptist Church; Almon Funeral Home.

#### FULTON COUNTY

**ISAAC AVITAN**, 57, of Alpharetta died Saturday. Graveside service, 2 p.m. today, Green Lawn Cemetery; Dressler's Jewish Funeral Care.  
**MELANIE DAWN STANLEY HARDIGREE**, 44, of Fairburn died Saturday. Funeral, 11 a.m. Tuesday, Holly Hill Funeral Home.  
**GAIL ALLEN KNUDSEN**, 71, of Roswell died Wednesday. The body will be cremated. Funeral, 11 a.m. today, St. Peter Chanel Catholic Church; Northside Chapel Funeral Directors.  
**CHARLES SCHWEITZER**, 61, of Alpharetta died Saturday. Graveside service, 11 a.m. Tuesday, Arlington Memorial Park; H.M. Patterson & Son, Arlington Chapel.

#### GWINNETT COUNTY

**RICHARD ALDEN POWELL**, 65, of Snellville died Friday. Funeral, 11 a.m. Tuesday, Tom M. Wages, Snellville Chapel.

**MICHAEL J. STILL**, 59, of Lawrenceville died Sunday. Funeral, 2 p.m. Tuesday, Tim Stewart Funeral Home, Lawrenceville.

#### HALL COUNTY

**NORMA BELL AUSTIN**, 78, of Gainesville died Sunday. Funeral, 2 p.m. Tuesday, Memorial Park Funeral Home.

**JANNIE BROWN**, 56, of Gainesville died Friday. Funeral, 1 p.m. Tuesday, New Life Missionary Church; Memorial Park Funeral Home.

**GRADY LEE PRIEST JR.**, 62, of Gainesville died Saturday. The body was cremated. Memorial service, 7 p.m. today, Memorial Park Funeral Home.

**DENNIS SCOTT RICE**, 40, of Flowery Branch died Friday. Funeral, 11 a.m. Tuesday, Grace Baptist Church; Memorial Park South Funeral Home.

#### HENRY COUNTY

**JESSE LINWOOD "WOODY" CRAFT**, 73, of Stockbridge died Saturday. Funeral, 3 p.m. today, Horis A. Ward, Parkway Chapel.

**ELEANOR MAY EVANS**, 93, of Locust Grove died Friday. Graveside service, 11 a.m. Tuesday, Sherwood Memorial Gardens; Pope Dickson & Son, Jonesboro Chapel.

**MAUDE L. TINGLE**, 92, of Jackson died Saturday. Funeral, 11 a.m. Tuesday, Haisten Funeral Home, McDonough.

#### NEWTON COUNTY

**WALLACE ALDWIN SCARBOROUGH**, 92, of Oxford died Saturday. Funeral, 2 p.m. Tuesday, Caldwell & Cowan.

#### PAULDING COUNTY

**CLARA MAE DUCKETT GINN**, 78, of Dallas died Saturday. Funeral, 6 p.m. today, Clark Funeral Home.  
**PLEDGER L. HICKS**, 90, of Dallas died Sunday. Funeral, 2 p.m. Tuesday, High Shoals Baptist Church; Jeff Eberhart Funeral Home.

#### WALTON COUNTY

**TALMADGE BUTLER**, 82, of Monroe died Sunday. Funeral, 2 p.m. Tuesday, Bible Baptist Church; Arthur Bowick Funeral Directors, Monroe.

#### GEORGIA

**RUTH J. BENNETT**, 87, of Jefferson died Sunday. Funeral plans will be announced by Evans Funeral Home.

**MARY LUCY RIDER CHAPMAN**, 76, of Union Point died Saturday. Graveside service, 11 a.m. Tuesday, Siloam Cemetery; McCommons Funeral Home.

**ROBERT OSCAR CRITTENDEN**, 60, of Shellman, formerly of Marietta, died Saturday. Funeral, 11 a.m. Tuesday, East View Cemetery; Lunsford Funeral Home, Cuthbert.

**McFLOYD DALRYMPLE**, 68, of Toccoa died Saturday. Funeral, 2 p.m. today, First Methodist Church; Acree-Davis Funeral Home.

**DOROTHY McDOWELL GAINES**, 35, of Forsyth died Saturday. Funeral plans will be announced; Lewis Sims & Son, Jackson.

**DAN GARDNER**, 74, of Greensboro died Saturday. Funeral plans will be announced; Watts Funeral Home.

**LOWELL JAMES "BO" LOGAN**, 65, of Calhoun, formerly of Ellijay, died Saturday. Funeral, 11 a.m. today; Logan Funeral Home.

**HAROLD McNEAL**, 85, of Windermere died Saturday. Funeral, 11 a.m. today, Nazareth United Methodist Church; Carter Funeral Home.

**DOROTHY MYRICK**, 69, of Flovilla died Saturday. Funeral plans will be announced; Lewis Sims & Son, Jackson.

**PHYLLIS JEAN PANDER**, 60, of Blairsville died Friday. The funeral was Sunday; Mountain View Funeral Home.

**DELOIS PEEK**, 72, of Union Point died Saturday. Funeral plans will be announced; Watts Funeral Home.

**CLYDE JUNIOR SHULER**, 77, of Winder died Sunday. Funeral, 2 p.m. Wednesday, Smith Funeral Home.

**JOHN HARVEY SILVERS**, 73, of Calhoun died Saturday. Funeral, 3:30 p.m. today, Max Brannon & Sons Funeral Home.

**KATHERINE LOUISE SLATON**, 73, of Dalton died Sunday. Funeral, noon Tuesday, Eleventh Avenue Baptist Church; Ponders Funeral Home, Dalton.

**JOHNNIE L. SUMLIN**, 80, of Commerce died Saturday. Funeral, 11 a.m. today, Ivie Funeral Home.

**JOE A. WARD**, 62, of Ellijay died Saturday. Funeral plans will be announced; Logan Funeral Home.

**JOHNNY WHITE**, 63, of Flovilla died Saturday. Funeral plans will be announced; Lewis & Sims & Son, Jackson.