

‘Missing Johnny’ Documentary on MSNBC Traces Disappearance of West Des Moines Paper Boy

Producers interviewed at least a dozen local residents familiar with the disappearance of Johnny Gosch on his morning paper route three decades ago.

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Filmmaker David Beilinson shuddered a bit at the timing – first last summer when Evansdale cousins Lyric Cook-Morrissey and Elizabeth Collins disappeared, and then again Wednesday when their bodies were found by hunters in northeast Iowa.

When the Evansdale cousins vanished, Beilinson and his film crew were in Iowa interviewing West Des Moines mom Noreen Gosch for a documentary on her 30-year search for answers about the disappearance of her son, Johnny, who never came home from his morning paper route on Sept. 5, 1982.



The film, “Missing Johnny,” premieres Sunday, Dec. 16, on MSNBC’s Maximum Drama program. It airs at 8 p.m. CST.

When the cousins’ bodies were discovered, Beilinson was again focused on the Gosch case and was contacting media for the one-hour documentary.

In a news release, Beilinson and his Rumur Inc. co-producers – Suki Hawley and Michael Galinski – said the one-hour program “chronicles the endless intrigue and conspiracy theories surrounding the eyewitness sightings, physical evidence and case-turning discoveries which span across three decades.”

Besides Noreen Gosch, those interviewed included her former husband and Johnny’s father John Gosch Sr., convicted child molester Paul Bonacci (who confirmed his role in Johnny’s abduction), West Des Moines Police Lt. Cam Coppes, retired police Capt. Bob Rushing, and Eileen Wixted and Frank Santiago, reporters for WHO-TV and the Des Moines Register, respectively, who covered the then 12-year-old’s disappearance.

Beilinson said in an interview with Patch that he and his co-producers have been aware of the Gosch case for about a decade and view it as a watershed case that changed how law enforcement officials respond to reports of missing children.