

MISSING PERSONS - UPPER PENINSULA UPPER COUNTRY VERTICAL FILE

Air search turns up no new clues

By Dean Sharp

either Karl Heikell, 11, missing since Oct. 31 or Waino Solmonson, 77, missing since Nov. 18.

Samuel (Eka) Lasanen called the Calumet Post Sunday about a concentration of sea gulls around the Calumet Dam area where he lives. A State Police Trooper and several members of the Keweenaw Sportsmen's Club searched the area on foot in case the gulls, which are scavengers, had turned up a body.

A report of a large number of sea gulls northwest of Calumet May 2, and a subsequent foot search by the State Police and other individuals, preceded an already planned helicopter search for two area persons missing since last year.

Unfortunately, neither search turned up any new evidence on the whereabouts of

The State Police and the Heikell family had searched the swampy area between Heikell's home and Calumet on foot before, but each lead the Post receives is investigated, according to Lt. John Grimm, commander of the Calumet Post.

On May 6 a State Police helicopter came from district headquarters in Negaunee to search for the two persons. The State Police had planned to scan the area by air as soon as

the snow base had melted and before the leaves came out on the trees.

Grimm said the past week was a good time for the search and the decision to send up the helicopter was made before the May 2 report of the sea gulls. (The post had hoped to use the Department of Natural Resources plane but it was in Lansing for a check-up.)

The State Police purchased the helicopter last November (it was used to search the Calumet area for Heikell once before), but there is no pilot at this time in Negaunee where it is based. Coincidentally, Lt. Andrew Keeney, a pilot with the state headquarters in Lansing, was in the Upper Peninsula.

Keeney arrived in Calumet shortly before noon last Thursday, and landed the two-seater helicopter at the field across from the Calumet Post.

The search was divided into two maneuvers. Keeney first took Laurium patrolman P.J. Baroni up to search for Solmonson, who walked away from the Laurium Elders Home Nov. 18.

According to Grimm, Solmonson left the home a day before the first permanent snow of the season, making aerial search impossible. Troopers from the Post, along with officers from the Laurium and Calumet Police Departments, the Houghton County Sheriff's Department and volunteer civilians combed the area north and east of Laurium and on M-203 west of Calumet for two days, but were unable to find any clues of his whereabouts.

Solmonson walked away from the home the day before and was found two miles west of Calumet on M-203. He was last seen wearing a grey or blue jacket, an olive green cap, grey work pants and a red checkered shirt, according to State Police reports.

Keeney and Baroni searched the same general area for about an hour last Thursday, but were unsuccessful in the attempt.

"There is only a limited amount of (search) area, and it doesn't take long at all to search with that helicopter," Grimm said.

Grimm himself had gone up in the helicopter last November to look for Heikell.

"It's surprising how visible everything is up there," he said.

Keeney landed the helicopter at the post to drop off Baroni and picked up Trooper Dan Sarazin to look for any signs of Heikell, who disappeared last Halloween, Oct. 31, 1981. The search concentrated on an area roughly from Tamarack Location to Centennial Heights, over the area where the gulls had been reported days earlier.

The area, which Grimm described as a "highly traveled area" has been searched numerous times by the State Police, local police, Karl's family and volunteers. It was last searched by air November 17, 1981.

Again, no evidence was found.

The State Police are not closing the book on

