

Kidnaping

Suspects Lived in 'Boom Town'

UNION CITY, N.J.(AP) — They used to call Union City "Boom Town" and it was filled with cheap hotels, strip joints and bars.

Then the Cubans began arriving and things began to change. Half of the city's 70,000 residents are of Hispanic origin and they have helped convert Union City into a thriving commercial center.

Eligio and Norberto Fernandez, along with Ricardo R. Tuero and Wilfredo Alvarez, all accused of kidnaping 8-year-old John Calzadilla, grew up in this community.

None of the four came from an impoverished background.

Eligio worked as a machinist for a dye company and his brother, who dropped out of high school, was unemployed. Alvarez worked as an auto mechanic.

People who know the four describe them in various ways. Some say they are "quiet, good boys." Others say they were always in some sort of trouble.

Police say there is no particular crime or juvenile delinquency problem in the Cuban community. "It's no better or worse than any other section," a police spokesman said.

The Cubans started arriving after Fidel Castro took over Cuba and their numbers grew after the abortive "Bay of Pigs Invasion" in 1962. They opened stores, flower shops, banks and restaurants, and began restoring the houses they purchased. They brought their doctors, dentists and priests.

Bergenline Avenue, the main street through this town on the west bank of the Hudson River, has a distinctly Spanish flavor. It is lined with shops bearing advertisements in Spanish. Some schools offer bilingual courses, and there is a Spanish weekly newspaper in town.

Many persons on Bergenline Avenue expressed a mixture of shock and disbelief at the kidnaping. Many found it difficult to comprehend that John Calzadilla, a boy of Cuban extraction, had been kidnaped for ransom by four Cuban-Americans.

"We can't believe they did it," said one neighbor of the Fernandez brothers who refused to give her name. "They come from a good family. Their father works like a horse. They're a close family.

Mrs. Barry Scott, Alvarez' landlady, described the family as "quiet people" who always paid their \$235 monthly rent.

Armando Perez, owner of the El Congo Cafeteria, described Mrs. Fernandez as a "hardworking woman."