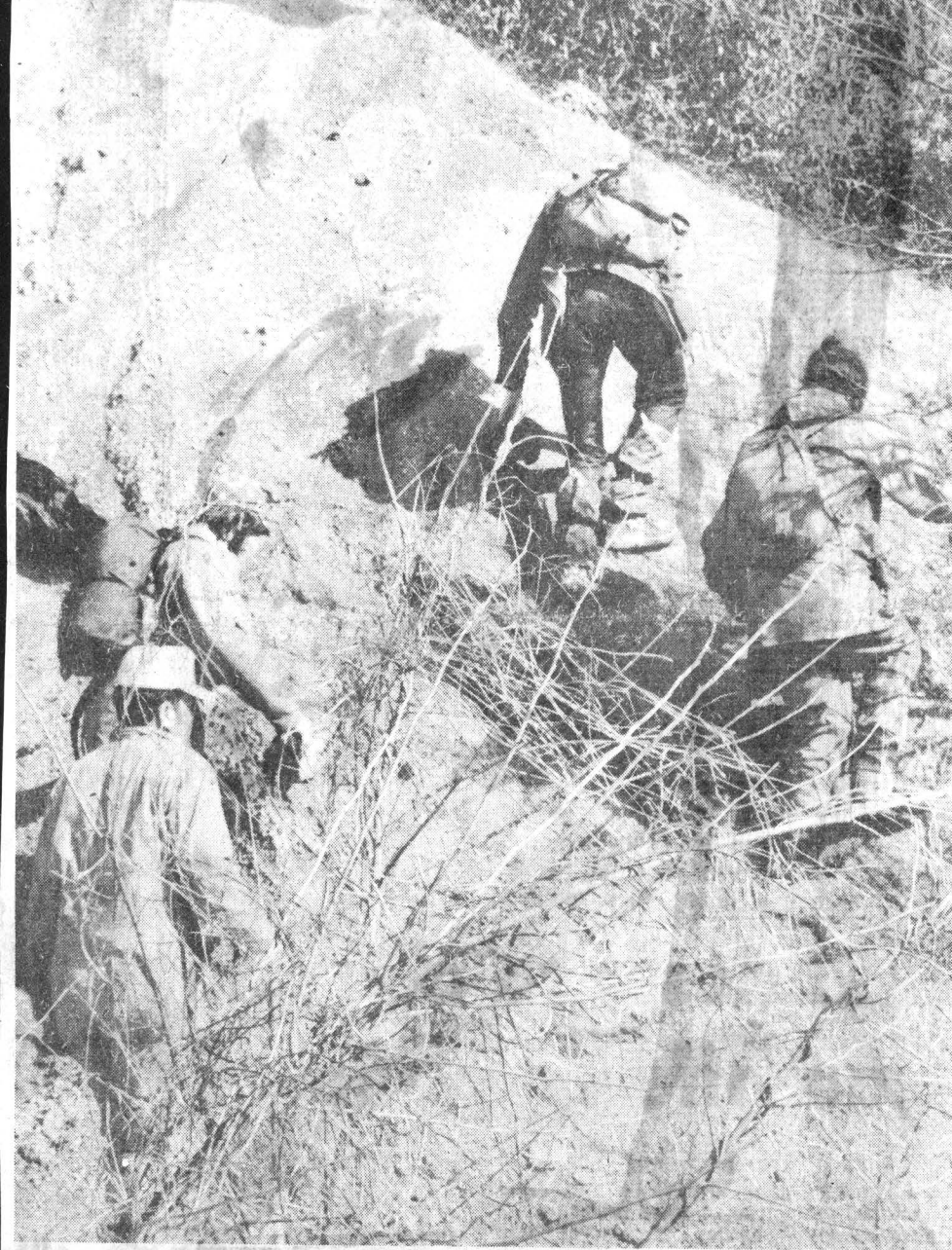


LYNCHBURG, VA. DAILY ADVANCE  
23 Feb. 1978



**Hunt for mentally retarded boy intensifies near James River**  
Searchers from northern Virginia comb rugged terrain for Chipper Hagood  
(Aubrey Wiley Photo)

## Professional teams, dogs join hunt for missing boy

By FRANK FENTON

Teams of professional searchers aided by Air Force tracking dogs today began a systematic search of the 1,000 acres of woodlands adjoining the Lynchburg Training School and Hospital for a 16-year-old mentally retarded boy missing since Monday.

Dr. K. Ray Nelson, LTSH administrator, said the search for Walter (Chipper) Hagood of Henry County has spread out over rough, heavily wooded areas with the aim of seeking out every ravine and depression where a person could hide or otherwise be concealed.

Nelson said all members of the institution's staff have been pulled out of the search so they won't hinder others who are now under the control of the Appalachian Search and Rescue operation.

He said the missing boy, described as retarded and non-verbal, was last seen at about 3 p.m. Monday, in the center of the LTSH building area.

The boy is the son of Mr. and Mrs. W. Hugh Hagood of Collinsville. His father manages a department store there.

"He is quick, very quick," Nelson said. "He is like a four-year-old in his actions with the physical ability of a 16-year-old. He can be gone before you know it."

Hagood has run away from the institution several other times. One local law enforcement agent said he chased the youth in the downtown area several months ago. The boy was also reported to have been pulled out of the James River by another police officer who found him wading along the banks late last fall.

Nelson said the boy would have had to travel about a quarter of a mile through heavy brush to reach the river where it comes closest to the hospital grounds.

He said the hospital has about 500 heavily wooded acres which are bordered by another 500 wooded acres.

David K. Pechmann, assistant LTSH administrator, said Wednesday that about 50 members of the hospital staff conducted the initial search after it was learned the boy was missing. The staff members were augmented Tuesday by local law enforcement agencies and rescue oriented units. Tracking dogs supplied by the city Sheriff's Department took part in the search along with a helicopter supplied by the State Police and a fixed-winged airplane supplied by the Civil Air Patrol.

The CAP members took part in Wednesday's search and are on stand-by alert today. At least 150 persons took part Wednesday in the search.

Nelson said the plight of the missing boy was picked up via radio by Air Force authorities in New York state and they sent an offer to supply highly trained tracking dogs from Scott Air Force Base in Illinois. The dogs were flown in Wednesday. Nelson said each of the three dogs is leading a search party.

Nelson said the boy has been at the hospital for a number of years.

Hopes for the boy's survival, if he did not fall into the James River, grow slimmer with each day and night of sub-freezing temperatures. Unless he has found adequate shelter, continued exposure could be fatal.

Nelson said the boy's mental condition is such it is doubtful he would plan to runaway, but that his action would be a spur of the moment impulse.

In view of the fact he has, on at least one previous occasion, made his way to downtown Lynchburg, he could have left the immediate area of the hospital and gone into a well-populated area.



## Experts direct search for missing patient

CONOVER

Keith Connoder, left, Chris Stubbs and Yorke Brown of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Unit from Charlottesville pour over maps of the terrain surrounding the Lynchburg Training School & Hospital as the search for the missing mentally

retarded 16-year-old Walter (Chipper) Hagood enters its fourth day. The searchers, described by Dr. K. Ray Nelson as "professionals", are being aided by tracking dogs supplied by the U. S. Air Force.

(Aubrey Wiley Photo)

# Hopes Fade in Search for Retarded Boy, 16

2/25/50  
WASHINGTON STAFF

LYNCHBURG (AP) — Hopes of finding a 16-year-old, mentally retarded boy, missing five days from Lynchburg Training School and Hospital, waned yesterday three Air Force tracking dogs and their handlers continued to search wooded areas around the hospital.

Dr. K. Ray Nelson, superintendent of the hospital, said the specially trained dogs would continue to search out all areas not scoured by trained searchers the last three days.

But, he said, the dogs will cease operations today if the boy, Walter "Chipper" Hagood of Henry County, is not found by then. Other searchers pulled out Thursday night.

Young Hagood, reportedly a pa-

tient at the hospital for the past 10 years, was last seen on the hospital grounds about 3 p.m. Monday. He had run away from the institution on several previous occasions.

Asked whether Hagood might have sought shelter in heated buildings, such as a post office or church, Nelson said it was possible but not probable the boy had such reasoning powers.

Authorities at the hospital said he is non-violent and mildly mentally retarded. He cannot talk.

The missing boy, son of a Collinsville department store manager, has been the object of an intensive search in which as many as 150 persons took part at one time.

# Missing Youth Sought

LYNCHBURG (AP) — A massive search has been launched for a 16-year-old boy missing since Monday from the Lynchburg Training School and Hospital.

Some 150 searchers from area police departments and rescue squads were combing the area around the facility Wednesday for Walter "Chipper" Hagood. The hospital's grounds cover about 2,500 acres.

David K. Pechmann, assistant director of the hospital, said tracking dogs will be brought in to look for the boy, who has been missing since 3 p.m. Monday.

Pechmann said Hagood is non-verbal, non-violent and moderately retarded.

He said the youth is 5-foot-8, weighs 125 pounds, has brown hair and brown eyes and was wearing a blue shirt, blue jeans and tennis shoes when he disappeared.

Pechmann said the boy just "wandered off" the hospital grounds.