

‘Regular guy, a family man’ becomes a missing person

By John O’Brien

AT 4 A.M. Friday, May 11, Mrs. Joanne Jones could wait no longer. Frightened and unable to sleep, she called police to report her husband, wealthy businessman Arthur G. Jones, missing.

“Please find him,” she pleaded. “Art never missed dinner at home, never was gone overnight.”

Weeks later, there still is no trace of Jones, 40, or his late-model Buick, despite an intensive police investigation. Mrs. Jones has told a visitor to the couple’s large home in suburban Highland Park, “I don’t know what to think. I don’t have any answers.”

Neither do the police.

THEY HAVE dug into Jones’ background and wired his photograph and description to law enforcement agencies throughout the country, but they haven’t received a single response to the message.

“What is so strange is the fact that Mr. Jones was a very regular guy, a good family man,” said Donald Verbeke, chief of detectives in Highland Park, an affluent suburb in Lake County.

“All police know for sure is that he is gone — vanished completely. There has been no demand for ransom, so a kidnaping is out of the question. It’s a mystery.”

Verbeke’s investigation has uncovered some unexpected leads, however, including Jones’ involvement with professional bookmakers.

“He had a reputation as a gambler,” Verbeke said, adding that Jones, a former member of the Chicago Board of Trade, may have run up extensive gambling debts before his disappearance on May 10.

QUESTIONING of business associates also revealed, police said, that Jones had worked with Carl Gaimari, 34, another commodities trader who was shot to death by two masked men in his suburban Inverness home on April 30, 10 days before Jones disappeared.

Gaimari’s murder also is unsolved.

In an interview with *The Tribune*, Mrs. Jones said her husband sold his seat as a broker on the Board of Trade last November for \$210,000, but used all the money to make good on business and gambling debts.

She said Jones “was not himself” in recent months, and was particularly upset at the news of Gaimari’s death. She said he “paced about the house” and was “jittery,” but she never quite knew why.

“Art was quick with numbers,” she

related. “He bought his seat on the board three years ago, and I thought he was very successful. When he left last fall, he told me he would buy a financial instrument membership there in six months after recouping his losses.”

MRS. JONES, 35, an attractive, dark-haired mother of three, spoke of her husband in the living room of the family’s spacious ranch-style home, situated on two acres and protected by a German shepherd guard dog and a high, chain-link fence.

She and Jones were married 18 years ago, after a childhood romance. They had met while Jones worked as a delivery boy at her father’s liquor store in nearby Highwood, where both grew up. Jones managed the place until joining the Board of Trade in 1976.

As she talked, her gaze shifted occasionally to a volleyball court in the backyard, visible through glass patio doors. She remarked how Arthur and the children often had played there together.

“I’m trying to protect the children,” she said. “I told them their father is missing. But I don’t have any answers. Oh, God, I hate this waiting.”

SHE LAST SAW her husband when he left home shortly after noon on May 10, telling her, “I have to meet a guy at 2 o’clock on business. I’ll be back this afternoon.”

Mrs. Jones said he was wearing only a tennis shirt and slacks and she asked him, “How can you go out looking like that?” He replied, “The meeting is not

in a business office.”

He drove off in his silver 1977 Buick — and he has not been seen since.

Mrs. Jones said he gave her “no inkling” of whom he was to meet or where. “But I knew he was upset about something. Why, he left his bracelet home, and he never went anywhere without it.”

Adding to the mystery, police said, were plans by the couple to visit friends in California—a trip for which airline tickets already had been purchased. But Jones postponed the trip one week, because of business, and Mrs. Jones said she thought he expected to receive money for some sort of deal.

POLICE SAID Jones, a husky man of 5 feet, 11 inches, weighing 210 pounds, had no known business partners, or even an office.

Yet, they said, he left home each morning and returned at midafternoon. Mrs. Jones said she believed her husband went to Chicago each day, but his former colleagues on the Board of Trade told police they hadn’t seen him since last year.

“I don’t know if his disappearance was foul play, or if he had a nervous breakdown and doesn’t know what he is doing,” she said. “But if he is running scared of somebody, I feel he at least would have called me.”

Detective Chief Verbeke said he is “trying to keep an open mind” about the puzzle, and is unwilling to speculate. He hopes that in time he will have the answer, and with it the safe return of Arthur G. Jones.