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**Page:** 1B

## MISSING PIECES COULD FURTHER HURT JOYLAND

CLOWN AND WURLITZER JUST THE BEGINNING

**WHITNEY COLEMAN**, *The Wichita Eagle*

A lawsuit may not be the only thing keeping Joyland Amusement Park from getting put back together. Pieces of Joyland bought as nostalgic antiques - and close replicas - are strewn across the city and possibly the country.

One missing piece means far more to a former employee who was caretaker of the clown and organ for 15 years.

Damian Mayes was 4 years old when he first met Louie, a nearly life-size carved clown who enchanted - and sometimes frightened - visitors of all ages as he played the park's automated Wurlitzer.

Mayes said when he was 15 and doing renovations for the park, owners Stanley and Margaret Nelson would let him take the clown home when the park closed in the winters. Mayes would apply a fresh coat of paint to Louie's grin or add to his whimsical attire.

But his labor of love is now missing, along with the organ.

In the Nelsons' lawsuit against former Joyland operators Robert Barnard and Michael Moodenbaugh, the clown is one of the items listed as damaged or taken from the park. The Nelsons hope to collect \$450,000 in back rent and damages from the suit.

The suit also states that the clown figure may have been taken out of state. Mayes said it's hard to tell if reported Louie sightings in Wichita are of the original clown or a replica.

He said he hasn't seen the original Louie in a few years.

And that's what he told Wichita police Tuesday when they knocked on his door, having received a tip that Mayes had the missing property. They found pictures, but no Louie.

Margaret Nelson said that the Nelsons do not know the clown's whereabouts. Wichita police Capt. Darrell Haynes said the Nelsons have not filed any stolen property reports on Louie.

"I have a pretty good passion for him," Mayes said. "It's really pretty upsetting."

Mayes, who builds and renovates organs, has tried to console himself with replica clowns and other Joyland knickknacks.

He said he would give the park owners back the pieces he's purchased from area antique stores if the park reopened.

But other items sold to collectors may not be as easily returned.

From Dodge 'Em car signs to Wacky Shack monsters, antique shop owner Grant Rine said about four years ago he started selling pieces of Joyland that he'd bought from the Nelsons.

"They were trying to preserve it as best they could," Rine said. "That was the way to do it. Let it find a home, each piece at a time."

Chris Cane, who considers himself the local representative of Barnard and Moodenbaugh, said he thinks they are the ones to preserve and restore the park to its original glory.

Cane and his family have been picketing outside City Hall and petitioning for the park's return, which they say has been halted by restrictions the city placed on the land while Barnard and Moodenbaugh ran the park.

City Attorney Gary Rebenstorf said, right now, the city is not planning to pay on a \$42 million lawsuit the former operators said they would file in a letter of intent sent to the city.

"They know what the city's position is," Rebenstorf said. "I don't think it will be a surprise."

Kurt Harper, the Nelsons' attorney, said Barnard and Moodenbaugh filed for an extension until Tuesday on their reply to the Nelsons' lawsuit.

Nick Marsh, who started a Web site about the park, [www.rememberjoyland.com](http://www.rememberjoyland.com), said he's sad to see the park in flux while the lawsuit continues.

He said the park is a historical gem that may never return to its original luster.

"I'm still trying to stay positive, but it's cautious optimism," Marsh said. "If it does close down, that's why I made the Web site - so people can see it, for nostalgia."

Reach **Whitney Coleman** at 316-268-6586 or [wcoleman@wichitaeagle.com](mailto:wcoleman@wichitaeagle.com).

kansas.com

-- Help remember Joyland by sending your Joyland photos to [photos@wichitaeagle.com](mailto:photos@wichitaeagle.com). Put "Joyland photos" in the subject field.

-- Get links to YouTube videos showing Joyland's roller coaster.

-- Look through a gallery of Eagle photos from Joyland.

**Illustration:PHOTO**

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