

Police search for man missing since Sunday

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HANCOCK COUNTY --A search intensified Wednesday for an elderly Alzheimer's Disease patient who has been missing since the weekend.

Deputies and volunteers from Gulf Coast Search and Rescue combed parts of the county looking for 86-year-old Ward Buel, officially reported missing Sunday. He had not been seen since leaving his daughter's home in Diamondhead on Saturday evening, officials said.

Buel is 5 feet, 8 inches tall and weighs about 165 pounds. When last seen he was wearing tan slacks, gray tennis shoes, a print shirt and a hat bearing an Ace Hardware logo. He ordinarily wears a gold wedding band, a silver watch and eyeglasses.

Officials were unsure whether the man simply wandered off and is still in the area or perhaps caught a ride and left Hancock County. "He walks a lot," sheriff's investigator Rita Blaize Watson said. "People would also give him rides."

Buel has a fondness for waffles and would often walk to the Diamondhead Waffle House, Watson said.

She said the Sheriff's Department has received several reports on sightings of men who resemble Buel. One report came in when a motorist told deputies he had seen a man fitting Buel's description walking north on Mississippi 603 near Interstate 10 about 4:30 p.m. Tuesday.

The pedestrian was reportedly carrying some type of bag. He shied away and kept walking toward the north when the driver pulled over to offer him a ride.

"I think it's really possible that was him," Watson said.

Investigators are also considering a report that Buel had said he wanted to be close to his late wife, who is buried in North Mississippi. Watson said she understood the burial site to be a cemetery in Tunica County, and would be notifying officials there.

Watson said family members told deputies Buel suffers memory lapses stemming from Alzheimer's Disease, but details were not available on how advanced his condition may be.

Anyone with knowledge of his whereabouts is asked to call the Hancock County Sheriff's Department at 466-6900 .

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