

Family appeals to FBI fugitive

Attention, Charles E. Collins III, wherever you are:

Your 15-year-old daughter still loves you.

Your 17-year-old son just wants to graduate high school next week without harm or humiliation.

The FBI agent who heads the search for you said he just wants to "talk."

And your ex-wife wants you to understand that she bears no grudge; she wants only happiness for your children and for you too.

By George Pawlaczyk

The Record

BALLSTON LAKE — This urgent, personal appeal of Arlene Carella, to Charles Collins, the man she divorced more than 13 years ago, comes a week after the failed Troy convenience store owner and lumber company heir mailed a bizarre and threatening nine-page manifesto to a host of federal officials. One copy was sent to President Bill Clinton.

The nationwide alert for the 42-year-old has made Carella afraid for her family's safety. After a call from the FBI, she was told that the family might be among Collins' potential targets.

Thursday afternoon, in the driveway of the home Collins once owned, Carella's muscular brother checked a reporter's

credentials before calling to his sister. He said he is visiting from Chicago to renovate his nephew's bedroom, but another brother said the visit was a result of Collins' threats.

The Chicago brother drives Carella, 36, every day to her Albany job as a legal secretary and then picks her up at night. The other brother, who lives nearby, makes regular auto patrols of her neighborhood.

The stress has made her ill, she said. On Thursday, her voice was racked by laryngitis.

The upheaval has resulted, Carella said, because "Char," as Collins is known by his friends and family, may not have been able to fully let go of the nearly perfect life he once had.

His manifesto is not his last-ditch effort to shake up a legal system that has denied his numerous appeals, she said.

Instead, she and her 15-year-old daughter speculated, the bizarre document may be a desperate appeal to somehow get things back to the idyllic mid-70s. That was when the marriage was intact, the family owned three stores and the future seemed limitless.

"I was from the country, Johnsonville, and he was from a powerful family. We were incompatible. That's how it turned out. I just want him to let go," Carella said.

See FAMILY Page A5

Family makes appeal to fugitive from FBI

Continued from Page A1
The fugitive might disagree.

His rambling, nine-page manifesto threatening terrorist acts such as blowing up a law school and firebombing the homes of lawyers and judges, seems to be a kind of legal brief.

In the document, Collins blames the legal system, a family court judge, even former Chief Judge Sol Wachtler; all of whom were named in a 1991 lawsuit against The Unified Court System.

Shirley King of 108 Brunswick Road, Troy, defended her son, who last lived in his parents' Florida home in Clearwater, Fla. There, King said, Collins became obsessed with what she claims is injustice: an unfair hearing in 1985 in family court. That was the incident that underlies all her son's current problems, she said.

But in Carella's home, the fugitive's daughter, a high school freshman who hasn't seen her father in eight years, glanced at

the nine-page document without interest.

But for several years, said the girl, she regularly corresponded with her father in Florida.

"If he receives counseling, I would like to see him again. He's my father," she said.

Carella said the family has struggled financially and was forced to file bankruptcy last year. She said she is afraid that an eviction action by Collins' parents might prove ultimately successful, leaving her and the kids homeless.

Carella said Collins' mother owns the home because he transferred his property during family court action in 1985.

She said that from the time of the 1979 divorce until 1985, she was allowed to live in the home and regularly visit Collins' parents "as long as I didn't date. In the Collins family you don't get divorced. You work things out and you stay together."