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... gains and the acquisition of hundreds of acres of open land.

Father urges court to close custody hearings to public

BY SHANNON O'BOYE
STAFF WRITER

The father of a boy allegedly kidnapped and then returned by his mother last year wants the public barred from their messy child custody hearings, and a judge said Tuesday he will decide on a day-by-day basis.

Court proceedings in Florida are almost always open to the public, but Gordon Brydger, the lawyer for Charles MacDonald, argued that MacDonald's 13-year-old son is being harmed by the intense exposure given to the case.

The boy's mother, Caren MacDonald, a Boca Raton artist, is charged with kidnapping him from school in October 2001. She took him to Costa Rica for eight months before flying back to the United States and turning him over to police.

Authorities accuse her of abducting the boy because she was afraid she would lose custody of him. She said she took the boy because he said he was being abused by his father's male lover. A family court judge issued an order banning Charles MacDonald's companion from having contact with the boy, even though police never filed criminal charges against him.

"Historically, the wife has made a circus of the proceedings," Brydger said. "She makes outrageous allegations that have never been proven

to be true. My client is concerned about his child's welfare."

Caren MacDonald and a group of supporters from the National Organization for Woman say they are concerned that Charles MacDonald's money and influential divorce lawyer will prevent her from getting a fair shake in court.

Her lawyer, Mary Harvey, argued that the boy has been in the public eye ever since his parents' custody battle culminated with him being taken from his Coconut Creek school in 2001.

MacDonald's supporters from NOW brought their own lawyer, Lisa Macci, to court Tuesday, because Broward Circuit Judge Ronald Rothschild had blocked them from previous hearings. Court Deputy Robin Wilson stopped the four women again Tuesday and made them sit outside until Macci showed the judge case law stating that civil court proceedings are supposed to be open to the public unless there is a compelling reason to close them.

Staff Researcher Barbara Hijek contributed to this report.

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Bruce Cook, journalist and novelist

BY MYRNA OLIVER
LOS ANGELES TIMES

LOS ANGELES • Bruce Cook, journalist, author and novelist who created the fictional Latino detective Chico Cervantes, and, writing as Bruce Alexander, penned historical novels featuring blind 18th century sleuth Sir John Fielding, has died. He was 71.

Mr. Cook died Sunday night at a Los Angeles hospital of a stroke, his family said.

His most recent novel, the 10th with Fielding as the protagonist, was *The Price of Murder*, published this year.

The popular Fielding series began with *Blind Justice* in 1994 and was based on a historical figure of the same name. The real Fielding was a blind British magistrate who, with his brother, Tom Jones novelist Henry Fielding, created the Bow Street Runners, London's first police force.

Washington Post Book World has called the Fielding mysteries "a wonderful series . . . packed with history and lore, and . . . altogether much fun."

Although the Fielding novels may have earned Mr. Cook the greatest critical acclaim, he was particularly appreciated in Los Angeles, where he lived for much of the last 20 years, for adding a Mexican American protagonist to the city's long tradition of detective fiction.

"Basically I did it because it hadn't been done," Cook told the *Times* in 1992.

Mr. Cook was born in Chicago. His family moved frequently as his father, a train dispatcher, was given new assignments. He earned a degree in literature from Chicago's Loyola University and served in the U.S. Army in Germany during the late 1950s.

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