

## Amicable End Sought / As kidnapping case stalls, man seeks bond with son

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**Abstract (Abstract):** [Anthony Russini], a plumber from Westbury, was reunited recently with his son, who vanished two decades ago with a couple who had tried to adopt the boy. Russini's son, now 22, turned out to have been raised in New Mexico under the assumed name Matthew Propp.

"I've tried; he's busy," Russini, 41, said outside State Supreme Court in Kew Gardens yesterday. "It's hard with all this," he added, referring to the case against [Barry Smiley] and Judith Smiley, the couple charged with abducting the boy when he was 15 months old.

Propp, who works as a security guard in Albuquerque, came to New York in early March to meet Russini and the brother and sister he never knew he had. That meeting went well, according to both father and son. But Propp still lives in New Mexico with the Smileys, who disappeared with him after their adoption was nullified.

**Full text:** In recent weeks, Anthony Russini had hoped to bond with his long- lost son who was spirited away from him in 1980 and resurfaced two months ago in connection with a widely publicized kidnapping.

But the relationship has not developed the way Russini would have liked.

Russini, a plumber from Westbury, was reunited recently with his son, who vanished two decades ago with a couple who had tried to adopt the boy. Russini's son, now 22, turned out to have been raised in New Mexico under the assumed name Matthew Propp.

However, Russini and his attorney indicated yesterday that the father's attempts to build a closer bond with his first-born child have stalled.

"I've tried; he's busy," Russini, 41, said outside State Supreme Court in Kew Gardens yesterday. "It's hard with all this," he added, referring to the case against Barry and Judith Smiley, the couple charged with abducting the boy when he was 15 months old.

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Barry Smiley, 56, also known as Bennett Propp, who surrendered on kidnapping charges March 8, appeared yesterday before Justice Joseph Grosso. But his wife, Judith Smiley, also known as Mary Propp, remained in New Mexico, forestalling any resolution of the case. Matthew Propp stayed home with her.

"She wants to be here, but she's not able to," Barry Smiley said outside the courthouse yesterday. He is out on bail and living at home in New Mexico.

Judith Smiley, who still has not been arraigned, did not come to court yesterday because of medical problems, her attorney, Stephen Brill, told the judge. Brill said Judith Smiley had "many ailments" and was still recovering from knee-replacement surgery. He added that she faces a strong risk of blood clots if she sits for long periods, as would be the case if she flew to New York.

Brill said she would "make every effort to be here" for the next court date next month.

Grosso said he hoped to have an "amicable resolution" of the case.

The Queens district attorney's office has said no deal will be offered until Judith Smiley surrenders.

Mary de Bourbon, a spokeswoman for the Queens district attorney's office, would not comment on any resolution. "We are not willing to discuss matters between counsel or possible dispositions," she said.

Meanwhile, Russini's attorney, Frederick Magovern, said the Smileys had to take responsibility for their actions and the resulting harm.

Part of that harm, of course, is the lack of a relationship between Russini and his biological son.  
"There have been attempts to establish one," Magovern said. "We're distressed it hasn't happened as yet."

**People:** Russini, Anthony, Propp, Matthew, Smiley, Judith, Smiley, Barry, Brill, Stephen

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