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**Former priest seeking custody of child fathered with stripper**



COURTESY: MIAMI HERALD

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0 MIAMI (WSVN) -- Papers filed in court have revealed that an ex-priest who fathered a baby with a former exotic dancer is seeking partial custody of the child.

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A lawyer for the baby's mother says former priest David Dueppen has admitted to fathering the baby, and the ex-priest from the Archdioceses of Miami has even filed court papers applying for majority custody.

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His attorney, Ray Rafool, said if his client ever wants to see his child, he has to fight for that right. "David loves his daughter. David wants to be with his daughter, and David looks forward to being the father and parent," Rafool said.

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The former Catholic priest is speaking out through his attorney about a romantic relationship with a former stripper that ended in the birth of a baby girl.

Last month, 42-year-old Beatrice Hernandez went public with their torrid love affair that began in 2003, when she was a stripper. The two are now on the brink of a bitter custody battle. "In my opinion, though it's not been defined," Rafool said, "is that the mother wants to keep my client completely 100 percent away from the child."

Forty-two-year-old Dueppen now admits to being the father of little Marilyn and filed a petition with the court for an official paternity test to prove it. "We've asked for contact with the child," Rafool said. "We've been told by her counsel that my client will not have contact with the child at this time.

"I think that people can understand what's been going on so far, and the decision is that my client needs to act very proactively to obtain his rights and protect his daughter and to share her life."

Proactive means taking his former lover to court. While the former priest plans to fight for majority custody, Dueppen's attorney expects Hernandez will seek sole custody.



According to Hernandez, the last time the subject of custody came up things turned violent. "And he grabs me there, and as he's grabbing me, I thought he's choking me," she said in an earlier interview.

The alleged altercation happened seven months ago, over child support and a DNA test, according to Hernandez, proving Dueppen fathered Marilyn, who she had named after

Dueppen's mother.

Hernandez said Dueppen denied the baby was his and threatened her to keep her quiet. "If you say anything, I'm going to take Marilyn away from you, and you will never see us again," she said he told her.

Dueppen denies the violent exchange ever happened. His attorney said the best interest of the child is to be with her father. "We believe that a majority of the time that the child spends with David Dueppen will be a benefit to the child, to David Dueppen and also will be a benefit to the mother," Rafool said.

Dueppen took a definite leave of absence in August from his latest parish. He is now seeking employment outside of the priesthood.

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