

# Child Was A Phantom

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## Ex-husband Paid \$20,000 To Support Nonexistent Daughter

BY CAROLYN CARLSON  
Journal Staff Writer

On the surface, Steve Barreras looked like another deadbeat dad.

He'd been hauled into court and had his wages garnished. He and his new wife had lost their 2003 tax refund to pay child support. He had been peppered with letters and demands for money for a child he supposedly fathered five years ago.

But this legal case had one big problem: Last week a judge ruled the child does not exist — even though Barreras had already paid \$20,000 in support.

In what was apparently an elaborate ruse, the alleged mother orchestrated fake DNA evidence and forged a Social Security number and birth and baptismal certificates, court records show.

In the strangest twist of all, Viola Trevino on Monday brought a stranger's child to court, alleging it was her daughter. Under consideration in Judge Linda Vanzi's courtroom was a motion filed in September to reopen the couple's 1999 divorce on Barreras's request that the child be produced.

Trevino had been ordered to bring the girl to court, but instead she picked up a 2-year-old girl and her grandmother from a South Valley street, promising them a trip to see Santa Claus and \$50.

After feeding them hamburgers, she parked near the courthouse, where she left the grandmother in the car and took the child into court. When the grandmother followed her into court, Trevino had to admit that the child was not hers.

"I have seen hundreds of jury trials and I have never seen anything like this," Rob Perry, Barreras' attorney, said.

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ROB PERRY,  
STEVE BARRERAS'  
ATTORNEY