

Russian billionaire fails to win back daughter in Bridgeport court

By Daniel Tepfer

A Superior Court judge on Tuesday refused to force the reunification of Russian billionaire Shalva Chigirinsky with his 12-year-old daughter, who had accused him of sexually assaulting her.

“Given her somewhat gloomy history, the minor child appears to be doing reasonably well in her current environment,” Judge Mark Gould ruled, denying Chigirinsky’s request for visitation and granting a motion for sole custody by the girl’s mother, Tatiana Panchenkova.

The girl “is firmly locked into her position that she wants nothing to do with the defendant,” the judge said.

“We are very grateful to Judge Gould; he got it right,” said Panchenkova’s lawyer, Norman Pattis. “This was a difficult and tragic case and Ms. Panchenkova will be delighted by the judge’s decision.”

“We are very grateful to Judge Gould; he got it right,” said Panchenkova’s lawyer, **Norman Pattis.**

At the end of one hearing during the case, Chigirinsky had vowed to Pattis that he would win the case because he has more money.

Chigirinsky was once considered one of Russia’s richest men, with



Exterior of Fairfield County Courthouse, Bridgeport Superior Court

a fortune estimated by Forbes at \$1.6 billion. In March, according to press reports, he celebrated his 70th birthday at a restaurant in his native Georgia that drew

300 guests, including associates of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Italian singer Alessandro Ristori.

In 2009, Chigirinsky and Panchenkova, the daughter of a former Russian ambassador to the U.S, were divorced in Moscow after Panchenkova claimed that Chigirinsky beat her severely on numerous occasions, once causing her to have a miscarriage.

The family previously lived in a \$17.3 million upper East Side Manhattan condo but Panchenkova now lives with her children in a \$10 million cottage in Greenwich, while Chigirinsky according to reports, moves between homes in Moscow, London and New York.

Panchenkova has since remarried.

Initially, the couple had joint custody of their daughter, but in November 2015, the girl claimed she had been sexually abused by her father. The state Department of Children and Families investigated and found the claim to be substantiated. In May 2016, Chigirinsky was charged with two counts of risk of injury to a child, according to court records.

The charges were later dismissed after state prosecutors in Stamford said they could not prove them beyond a reasonable doubt, but in the meantime, a

judge suspended Chigirinsky's visitation rights.

A later attempt at reunification between Chigirinsky and his daughter at the Stamford Town Center under the supervision of a psychiatrist ended with the girl suffering an "emotional, hysterical meltdown," according to testimony at a hearing before Gould.

However, at that same hearing, Chigirinsky when asked who was responsible for his daughter's distrust motioned toward his ex-wife, who was calmly listening to a Russian translator.

"The mother and her household have filled the entire nest with lies," Chigirinsky said.

"Emotionally, the minor child has made a stand, and faces loss of her identity and autonomy if she gives in to the reunification process," Gould ruled. "(She) is stable, happy, healthy, high functioning, relaxed and calm in her current living situation with her mother and her stepfather." ■