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THE SCARFACE LEGACY

Al Capone's grandson tells tales at gangster's home

It's not easy growing up the grandson of America's most famous gangster.

Christopher Knight is the grandson of **Al Capone**, who retired to Miami's Palm Island before he died in 1947. In his new book *Son of Scarface*, Knight details growing up in a broken home, finding out about his grandfather and being abused by his mother.

We talked to Knight, who will celebrate his book launch at his grandfather's former stomping grounds on Saturday.

Q: Had you ever been to your grandfather's Palm Island estate before?

A: I was there at my grandfather's estate for the first time in May 2006. It took a long time of building up the courage to go to see the home my father spoke of. . . . I remember that day driving up to the house. My heart was aching. I felt that I was able to reconnect with my father.

Q: So visiting here is

bittersweet?

A: I do have some bittersweet feelings. On one hand, Florida is a beautiful place to retire, vacation and to have a good old time. But on the other hand, I know that Florida is the place where my beloved father had a great connection, too. I feel blessed in a way that my grandfather's house is still there, just the way it was back in the day.

Q: Does it at all disturb you that the movie *Scarface* is such a cult hit?

A: It is very disturbing to me to see how my grandfather's character has played negatively in movies. I think it is amazing that my grandfather has become a living legend. . . . But the disturbing part is that my grandfather is not portrayed as a human being with a combination of both bad and good sides. He was, after all, a father, a husband and a friend to many people. . . . He gave food to countless numbers of starving people during the Depression. I believe the main reason why his legacy is still alive today is because of the goodness he did do for people.

Q: When Geraldo Rivera was sifting through your grandfather's "vault," what was your reaction?

A: My sister and I were just amazed by the publicity. We were like, 'What's the big deal? Al Capone, that man, is supposed to be our grandfather.' We could tell our friends, but no one else. Who would believe us at the time? When the vault came up empty, we just laughed and said, ``Uh huh. Do you think our grandpa would leave his money hidden in some old vault? No way! . . . I have a very good idea where the money is, and I hope someday I can have Geraldo share in this experience with me.

Q: Proceeds from your book are being donated to the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and President Clinton's Global Initiative. Why?

A: I really was able to connect with the Boys & Girls Clubs and President Clinton's Global Initiative on Making a Commitment. I wish I had been able to have the Boys & Girls Clubs available to me as a young boy. Their commitment to children, taking in and giving children who are pretty much on their own in this world, giving them a place to grow, bloom like the colorful flowers that they should be, instilling confidence in children . . . all really hit home with me.

Q: Why choose Miami and not Chicago for the launch of your book?

A: I believe the Capone Estate was the place where my grandfather was able to shield his family, where they were able to live and have a somewhat secluded life. Ninety-three Palm Avenue meant a great deal to the Capone lineage.