Scots family embroiled in Narnia Internet dispute

By John Joseph

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LONDON (Reuters) - A Scottish family have become embroiled in an intellectual property dispute with the estate of the author C.S. Lewis after buying a Narnia Internet domain name for their 10-year-old son as a birthday present.

Richard and Gillian Saville-Smith, who live in Edinburgh, paid 70 pounds ($140) to purchase the domain name Narnia.mobi from the internet registration company Fasthosts in 2006 so their son could have it as an email address.

They were asked to return the domain name to the C.S. Lewis company, owner of the author's estate, but refused. The family then received a 128-page legal complaint filed with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Switzerland.

"We'd been saving it as a surprise for our little boy's birthday, to coincide with the release of the Narnia film," said Mrs. Saville-Smith, referring to the British release of Walt Disney Co's "The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian."

No one was available for comment from Baker & McKenzie, the law firm that represents the C.S. Lewis estate.

"Prince Caspian," the second in a series of films based on Lewis's "Narnia" books, will have its British premiere on June 19. It follows 2005's "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe."

"Our whole family are great admirers of C.S. Lewis and he must be turning in his grave about all this," added Mrs. Saville-Smith, who is an award-winning Scottish poet.

The family must reply to WIPO by June 23, with the Organization expected to make its decision within a month.

"We've never made any money out of this domain and have no interest in doing so," Mr. Saville-Smith, who is an accountant, told Reuters in an interview.
Saville-Smith, who is an accountant, told Reuters in an interview:

"We don't have the money to hire intellectual property lawyers, so we're saying 'help'. One thing for sure is that our response won't be 128 pages long, it will be more like 10 pages -- we're looking at quality rather than quantity.

"Even after WIPO makes its decision that's not the end of it because either party can appeal that verdict." he added.

"If the WIPO decides in favor of the C.S. Lewis estate, that would be the end of it for us. However, I don't expect they will, because their case is flimsy and we've done nothing wrong."

(Reporting by John Joseph; Editing by Catherine Evans)
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