

Murder charge over missing TV hostess

Husband released on bail



By ELISSA HUNT, Magistrates' Court reporter

A MILLIONAIRE businessman accused of killing his glamorous TV star wife more than nine years ago was yesterday freed on bail.

Former *The Price is Right* hostess Jacqueline Ramchen has not been seen since dropping her three children at school on April 10, 1992.

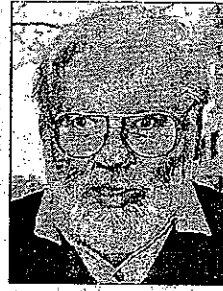
Slavik Ramchen, 60, was charged with her murder yesterday morning and released on bail last night after an urgent application to the Supreme Court.

Dressed in a navy jumper and checked shirt, Mr Ramchen appeared briefly at Melbourne Magistrates' Court before homicide squad detectives walked him to the Supreme Court to apply for bail.

In an affidavit presented to the court, Mr Ramchen, who has cared for the couple's children since his wife vanished, denied killing the former model.

"I have always maintained my innocence of these charges... and have co-operated with police investigating the disappearance of my wife," he said in the affidavit.

Det. Sen-Sgt Charlie Bezzina, who headed the original investigation, told the court Mrs Ram-



Slavik Ramchen

chen called police after an incident of domestic violence about two weeks before she disappeared.

The incident resulted in minor injuries such as hair being pulled out and bruising, he said.

Mrs Ramchen's parents kept in close contact with their daughter and had not received so much as a birthday card since 1992.

Det. Sen-Sgt Bezzina told the court Mrs Ramchen had no means of supporting herself outside the matrimonial home and there was evidence of animosity between the couple.

Mrs Ramchen was still living at the couple's

South Yarra mansion, Fairbairn, but they had been separated for about six months pending a divorce, he said.

He agreed the case against Mr Ramchen was circumstantial.

Mr Ramchen who migrated to Australia from Ukraine in 1949 and was naturalised in 1951, offered a property worth more than \$500,000 as a surety for his bail.

Defence lawyer James Catlin said there was no forensic evidence linking his client to a murder.

Mr Ramchen had known of the investigation for more than nine years and had not fled the country, he said.

Justice William Gillard said while not all evidence had been presented to the court it seemed there was a slim case against Mr Ramchen.

Justice Gillard released him on bail with a \$200,000 surety and ordered him to hand in his passport.

Mr Ramchen, of Domain Rd, South Yarra, is due to appear at Melbourne Magistrates' Court in October.

Disappeared: Jacqueline Ramchen with her son Lev in 1992