AS SEEN IN Fortune & Forbes



Photo by Shelley Shroyer Photography

rivate investigator Anji Maddox knows she's done her job well if she doesn't have to testify in court. Once, however, she was called to the stand in a child custody case. As she was walking through the courthouse, the opposing attorney recognized her and immediately called a recess to prevent her from testifying. He knew that whatever she'd discovered about his client would destroy their case.

"When you hire a private investigator, you're buying negotiating power," says Maddox, chief investigator and president of She Spies Private Eye Inc. "If I find evidence of wrongdoing by the opposing side, they're going to settle." Settle they did, in this case: Her client won full custody of his son.

Maddox has loved investigating for as long as she can remember. As a kid, she hung out in libraries and cemeteries helping her mother, a genealogist, track down people. After graduating from college with a criminal justice degree, she worked as a juvenile probation officer and a background investigator with the Austin Police Department. Her sharp investigative skills and compassion for people—particularly youth—led her to form She Spies Private

Eye, a private investigation firm specializing in divorce and child custody cases.

The Good Guys

For Maddox, investigating is a two-part job. The first part involves research via online services, many of which are fee-based and unavailable to the public. The second consists of field work, like a classic stakeout. This is how she tracks down long-lost heirs (with her mother's help), runs deep background checks on contractors, and monitors sketchy business partners and insurance scammers.

Maddox also works cases involving clients who were catfished and swindled by online characters. "People need to be safer when meeting strangers online," she says. "It's surprising how even CEOs and wealthy business people put a lot of trust in someone they've never met."

A proud Christian and mother of three, with seven grandchildren, Maddox has a soft spot for children caught in the middle of ugly divorce settlements or court cases, and she vets clients extensively to make sure they're the better parent. "We're the good guys," Maddox says. "We gather evidence that will help the child land in the best home."

Her investigations have revealed hidden wealth and secret apartments—assets

often awarded to the parent whose partner maligned them. Sometimes Maddox must prove that infidelity occurred; other times she's investigating a spouse's new partner to make sure they're trustworthy.

The truth can get ugly, but Maddox isn't out to destroy families or break up marriages. She's committed to keeping kids safe and providing clients with the information they request in full confidentiality. "We uncover the truth so our clients can either expose what they know and reconcile or part ways and find happiness down the road," she says. It's not unusual for Maddox to get a call from a client thanking her for saving their marriage. "Knowledge is power," she says. "Not knowing is devastating."



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