

IN THE MATTER OF THE
LEVESON INQUIRY INTO
CULTURE, PRACTICE AND
ETHICS OF THE PRESS

Witness: H Mills
1st Statement of Witness
Exhibits: None
Dated: 26th January 2012

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HEATHER ANNE MILLS

I, Heather Anne Mills, of [REDACTED] will
say as follows:

1. I am a charity campaigner, television personality and public speaker. I was married to Sir Paul McCartney ("Paul") from 2002-2008.
2. I make this statement in response to a letter, dated 29th December 2011, sent to me by the Inquiry (after Lord Justice Leveson had heard evidence from Mr Piers Morgan) asking me to make a short statement covering:
 - a. whether or not I authorised Mr Morgan to access the voicemail he refers to;
 - b. whether or not I authorised Mr Morgan to listen to the voicemail he refers to;
 - c. whether or not I authorised Mr Morgan to access or listen to a separate tape recording of the voicemail he refers to; and
 - d. any other matters falling within the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.
3. The matters set out below are within my own knowledge, except where I indicate to the contrary.

Background to the Voicemail

4. In early 2001, I holidayed with my then-boyfriend Paul in India. On our return I learned of the earthquake which had rocked Gujarat on 26th January that year.
5. Hearing of the plight of the victims of the earthquake, and particularly those who had lost limbs, I explained to him that I would very much like to help. I had previously been involved in the distribution of over 27,000 limbs for amputees in the former Yugoslavia and felt that my experience could be of use to the 8,000 new amputees who were in need.

6. Having worked in the past on numerous occasions with Hello! Magazine in relation to my charity operations, I contacted their new editor Mr Phil Hall (who I later learned was another former News of the World editor) and proposed an arrangement to him whereby if he would make a donation from the magazine to a local amputee charity then I would provide him with the story of my visits and some photographs.
7. He agreed to my proposal and, having researched them and been in contact with them, I suggested that the donation be made to the Lions Club in Gujarat. The donation was duly made, and Mr Hall said that he would send out Ken Lennox, the photographer, to cover the trip.
8. Paul was not supportive about me going back and, one morning, we had a disagreement about it. I was unhappy as a result so left the house and went to spend that night with some friends in Middlesex.

The Voicemail

9. The following morning, when I awoke at their house, I dialled my messaging service. There were no "new" messages, but there were messages from Paul stored as "saved" messages. It is my recollection that, once listened to, a message would automatically be "saved" unless deleted. I can say honestly that at the time it didn't cross my mind that this was unusual.
10. When I listened to the messages, they were from Paul apologising and asking for forgiveness.
11. I have never played these messages to anyone and, apart from being in my voice mailbox, I have never had a recording of them. I never took a recording and I no longer have them or any access to them. The messages were deleted in 2001 when they happened.
12. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the only way anybody could have known about them or heard them is to have listened to them when they were on my voicemail messaging service system.
13. Later that same day I received a phone call from [REDACTED] *a former employee of the Trinity Mirror Group* who told me that he heard that I had had an argument with Paul and that he had sung a song down the phone to me.

JHM

14. I told him that the only way he could have known this was to have listened to my voicemail and he simply laughed. I told him that if he published the story I would take legal action. This was the first negative conversation I had had with [REDACTED] in the years that I had worked with him to promote the charities I support. [REDACTED] did not publish a story, and the first I heard of it again was many years later.

Mr Morgan's Article

15. On 19th October 2006, Mr Morgan published in the Daily Mail an article with the headline, "I'M SORRY MACCA, FOR INTRODUCING YOU TO THIS MONSTER." The article chronicled Mr Morgan's claimed involvement in introducing me to Paul.
16. In the middle of that article he writes that "Stories soon emerged that the marriage was in trouble – at one stage I was played a tape of a message Paul had left for Heather on her mobile phone."
17. I was not aware of this article at the time. I am aware from family and friends, however, that Mr Morgan has, over the years, written many negative articles about me. The first time, in fact, that I came to be aware of this particular article relating to the voicemail was in 2011.
18. I can categorically say that:
- I never authorised Mr Morgan to access my voicemail;
 - I never authorised Mr Morgan to listen to this, or any other voicemail; and
 - I have never played to Mr Morgan, nor authorised him to listen to, a recording of this or any other voicemail left on my messaging system.

The Press Complaints Commission

19. The inquiry, in its letter to me, invited my opinion on all of the matters falling within its Terms of Reference. One such issue upon which I have quite strong feelings is the current operation of the Press Complaints Commission.
20. Established with the self-professed aim of "working pro-actively behind the scenes to prevent harassment and media intrusion", the Editors' Code of Practice (the Code) is designed to allow the subjects of articles in the press to complain broadly

on three grounds: Accuracy, Privacy and the Protection of Children. There are, in fact, 16 heads of complaint, but these three are the main tenets.

21. In order to complain, one writes a letter to the PCC who, in the first instance, pass it on to the relevant publication's legal team. They write back a response. The complainant is then invited to accept their response (which, in my experience, is usually a boilerplate denial of any wrongdoing) or to pursue a formal complaint before the Commission.

22. The Commission is composed of seventeen members (seven of whom are serving newspaper Editors), and they will only consider matters which arise in contravention of the Code. They are not concerned with matters of taste, decency, causing offence to individuals or the tone of articles or the quality of the writing. Their sole sphere of interests is their own Code. Often their decision on the complaint is as non-committal and boilerplate as that of the publications themselves.

23. I have made several complaints over the years. All of them were to do with accuracy of material reported. The Code, on its face, says that "The Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information, including pictures" and says that journalists must "distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact". Of those complaints I was successful in a few but, for the most part, the publications were able to hide behind "protecting their sources" or simply saying that I hadn't shown that the material published was inaccurate.

24. Sometimes this is simply not possible. In order to get the target response from a newspaper (a published retraction/apology) you have to prove your innocence and spend time and resource showing that what was published was done so without them taking care. The Commission don't attach a very high threshold to "taking care", and, by allowing publications to protect their sources, won't divulge sufficient information to allow you to prove that care wasn't taken.

25. There is a mechanism in place to complain about the way in which any complaint to the PCC is handled. This involves writing to the Independent Reviewer. Regrettably, however, all he can do is compare the way in which the complaint was handled (ie, the procedure) with the way in which the PCC says it will handle complaints, rather than compare the outcome with how the PCC says it will censure irresponsible press activity.

HM

25. In my personal experience, the average time for resolution of a complaint is approaching a full year. This means that, even in the best case where it is agreed that a retraction/apology will be published, the damage has been done and all the apology does is to bring the issue back to the fore. It is not unusual for an apology to repeat the text complained of in full before saying that it was incorrect. It is also a sad fact that the retraction is rarely, if ever, printed with the same prominence on the same page as the original infringing article. An inaccurate front-page banner headline may, it seems, be retracted with a small, classified-ad style notice many, many pages back.
27. The current Code and Commission to enforce it are not entirely without worth. There are a great number of people who have pursued complaints which have been upheld and this, surely, is a good thing. The sadness is that a great number have also pursued valid complaints, only to be stonewalled by the boys-club of Editors. It is simply not fair that those people should have an expensive and unsure claim in libel as their only recourse.
28. It is my belief that to be an effective mechanism for encouraging the press to treat their subject-matter in an just and fair way (for this, surely, is the true meaning of articles being in the public interest), and to ensure the accuracy of material before, and not after, they publish, any Commission/Ombudsman/Regulator must be entirely separate. There should be no more Editors and no more press representatives deciding what is and is not acceptable.
29. In my opinion, the true judge of the public interest, of taste, decency, fairness and accuracy should be decided by a body made up solely of members of the general public. Newspapers should be able to hide behind confidential sources only in criminal matters and there should be some sort of strong and meaningful financial disincentive for newspapers to publish material which they cannot verify to be in keeping with the letter, and spirit of the Code (or its replacement).

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true.


HEATHER MILLS

20th January 2012