

## No letting it be Lawrence co. lays claim to Lennon, Ono video

By Donna Goodison | Thursday March 13 2008 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Business & Markets

It may be a "Long and Winding Road" for a Massachusetts company waging a court battle against Yoko Ono

Lawrence-based World Wide Video, which claims



Photo by Jeff Walsh

ownership of four days of raw video footage of late Beatles great John Lennon and Ono, is suing the oft-maligned widow for copyright infringement

World Wide says it bought 24 original videotapes and their copyrights from Anthony Cox for \$125,000 in 2000. Cox was Ono's husband prior to her marriage to Lennon.

Cox shot the intimate footage in February 1970, shortly before the Beatles publicly announced their breakup. It shows Lennon and Ono at home - including them getting dressed and having breakfast and Lennon styling Ono's hair - and in rehearsals and interviews.

World Wide says its purchase also included 10 copies of the footage and copyrights to Cox's "Portrait" documentary, documents filed in Massachusetts District Court state.

Just how the videotapes found their way to Ono, who now asserts copyright ownership of them, is a complicated story of alleged theft, threats and deception, according to the complaint. The suit also names Anthony Pagola, a Florida man whom World Wide is suing for copyright infringement, civil conspiracy and fraud.

World Wide filed a civil suit in Middlesex Superior Court in 2000 against John Messina, a New Hampshire man accused of stealing the original videotapes and copies from the company. Under a 2001 settlement, Messina, who was represented by Lawrence attorney John Buck, agreed to return the copies and use his best efforts to obtain the originals.

But in June 2001, Pagola allegedly approached World Wide as a representative of Magellan Trading Co. of Hong Kong. "Pagola threatened to destroy the tapes unless World Wide Video entered into an agreement with Magellan for the purpose of finding a third party to purchase the tapes," the court complaint alleges.

World Wide nevertheless agreed to allow Magellan to find a buyer interested in making a documentary from the tapes, according to the lawsuit. The agreement stipulated that World Wide had to approve any sale, said Joseph Doyle, the company's attorney.

"In no way were they giving up their ownership or copyright rights," Doyle said. "They were using Magellan strictly as

a broker ”

But Pagola and Buck then allegedly “entered into a conspiracy to solicit the sale of the videotapes and copyright to Ono,” according to the lawsuit. They allegedly made the \$300,000 sale without World Wide’s approval or knowledge by forging its principals’ signatures, the lawsuit claims. World Wide never saw any of the proceeds, Doyle said.


Buck denied the allegations yesterday and said he didn’t know how Ono got the tapes.

World Wide didn’t learn of the sale until 2005, when it tried to exhibit “3 Days In the Life,” a documentary that it produced from the tapes, Doyle said. Ono’s attorney sent a letter warning that a public showing would violate her copyrights.

Doyle said World Wide would never have agreed to a \$300,000 purchase price: “We believe it was much more valuable than that.”

Pagola could not be reached for comment, while Ono’s lawyers declined to comment. World Wide also plans to sue Buck, who filed for bankruptcy last year.

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