

Wife had affair with ex-student, claims man

She denies this and tells divorce hearing that he physically abused her

■ BY KIMBERLY SPYKERMAN

A MAN who is divorcing his teacher wife has alleged that she had an improper relationship with a 16-year-old student back in 1988, and that this continued on and off until 2008, when both she and the student were married and had children.

She denies the allegation, and alleges instead that he was having an affair with the family's Filipino maid, and was physically and verbally abusive to her.

The divorce hearing began in the Family Court yesterday, and was adjourned to a later date to be fixed.

The woman, 54, is currently a teacher at a well-known girl's school, while her husband, 47, is the managing director of a company that deals in scientific equipment.

The court has ordered that the couple not be named, to protect the identities of their two sons, aged 20 and 17.

The husband is filing for divorce on the grounds of unreasonable behaviour, citing his wife's "improper associations" with the former student, who is now 38 and works in a bank.

The court was told that he initially wanted to file on the grounds that she had committed adultery. But when asked if he had any photographic or video evidence of her having sexual relations with the former student to justify such grounds, he said he did not.

Taking the stand yesterday, he claimed his wife was emotionally distant and showed a "distinct loss of interest" in family affairs because of her "on-off" relationship with her former student.

Among other things, he said, he had planned a vacation to Australia in 2008 to bring the family closer together, but she showed little interest in the trip.

He also claimed that when one of their sons approached her for help in deciding whether to go to a junior college or polytechnic, she said she was too busy.

The court heard that the husband installed a program on his laptop in August

2008 that secretly captured screenshots at regular intervals whenever she used it, so he could check her e-mail messages. He did this after she started spending more time on her mobile phone and computer. It was through the program's recordings that he found out that she was still corresponding with the former student, he said.

The husband also gave evidence that the family maid had in the past pointed the former student out in photographs, and said that he had shown up at the family home regularly in a black Honda Accord.

He also claimed that his wife took money from a bank account meant for their children to pay a deposit on a new BMW.

During cross-examination, the woman's lawyer Koh Tien Hua from Harry Elias Partnership accused the husband of trying to embarrass his wife by raking up her past association with the former student.

He denied it. He said he had offered to settle the matter out of court, but she insisted on contesting it.

His wife has, through her court submissions, denied the allegations, and stressed that her relationship with the banker - who is now married with three young chil-

dren - was not improper, as her husband had claimed.

Instead, she said her husband had an "improper association" with their Filipino maid in 2005. She also counter-claimed that the marriage broke down as he was physically and verbally abusive towards her. She cited at least 10 instances where he had hit her, causing her "mental distress and fear for her safety".

Among other things, she said, he had used a whip to attack her and made her kneel for hours. Court documents also showed that she had filed for a personal protection order against him in August 1998, and made two police reports against him in April and June of 2009.

According to the woman's lawyer, the former student, who was not in court yesterday, is expected to take the stand as a defence witness at a later date.

Ties were frosty between the couple when they crossed paths at the Family Court yesterday. They refused to look at each other. Their two sons, who arrived with their father, also did not greet their mother when they saw her in court.

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