

Happy Days actors sue CBS for profits

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Erin Moran, left, and Marion Ross

Photograph by: Fred Prouser, Reuters, File, Reuters Life!

Actors from the TV comedy Happy Days have filed a \$10 million lawsuit against CBS and Paramount over profits from merchandising on everything from casino slot machines to T-shirts.

Anson Williams, Marion Ross, Don Most and Erin Moran -who all appeared on the 1974-1984 show - and Patricia Bosley, the widow of actor Tom Bosley, filed the lawsuit in Los Angeles, charging fraud and breach of contract.

Stars Henry Winkler (the Fonz) and Ron Howard, who played wholesome 1950s teen Richie Cunningham, are not part of the legal action.

Attorney Jon Pfeiffer said that except for a payment to Moran of over \$600 made more than 10 years ago, the other actors claim they have not received any share of CBS profits from merchandising deals.

The actors hired Pfeiffer last year after they heard about Happy Days casino slot machines that used their images. They also claim their images are used on Happy Days lunch boxes, T-shirts, board games, greeting cards and glasses.

"CBS has adopted a don't ask, don't pay policy," Pfeiffer told Reuters. "You don't ask, we don't pay, and the lawsuit is intended to remind them they have an obligation to pay."

The actors signed contracts entitling them to between 2.5 per cent and five per cent of net proceeds from merchandise with their image on it, according to the lawsuit.

The suit alleges that the actors and Patricia Bosley are collectively entitled to \$10 million in unpaid merchandising profits from the show.

The lawsuit is filed against CBS Studios Inc., a division of CBS Corp. that distributes the show, and Paramount Pictures, a unit of Viacom Inc. The show was produced by a division of Paramount.

CBS said in a statement; "We agree that funds are owed to the actors and have been working with them for quite some time to resolve the issue."

Tom Bosley played Richie's father; Ross was cast as Richie's mother; Moran played his sister; and Williams and Most portrayed his friends.

Moran told CNN in an interview that she lost her California home to a foreclosure last year.

"We hope to determine through the course of (the court case) whether Henry Winkler has been paid" for merchandising profits, Pfeiffer said.

"I have not talked directly to Ron Howard. I have to assume it's not even on his radar screen," he said.

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