

was a minor episode and it went almost unnoticed – but now, in the context of questions about what Ghislaine does and where Epstein gets his money from, it may offer an insight. According to **Conchita Sarnoff**, a producer and writer based in Washington who has known Ghislaine since the Nineties, the Shanks affair may be significant. 'It shows that Ghislaine acted as Wexner's agent,' Sarnoff told us. Even if she is not on Epstein's payroll, she has shown a willingness to help out Epstein's patron and mentor, Wexner.

Sarnoff added: 'I am saddened for Ghislaine. As a mother, as a woman. She saw a lot of things that maybe were not healthy. She started out with every opportunity to change the world for the better. Instead she has come to this. It's beyond sad.'

Epstein was convicted in 2008 of soliciting an underage girl for prostitution and served 13 months in jail. He is on America's sex offenders' register. During civil actions brought by young women who claimed they had also been Epstein's victims, lawyer Brad Edwards served a subpoena on Ghislaine, who was said to have recruited one of his clients to go to Epstein's Florida house. Edwards said he wanted to take evidence from Ghislaine but her lawyer said she had flown to England because her mother was dying and that she would not return to the United States. Two weeks after the case was settled out of court, Edwards said, he saw that Ghislaine was a guest at Chelsea Clinton's wedding in New York. That might have been the end of it, but events have now taken a strange turn. Epstein is suing Edwards over his role in the civil actions, and that case now threatens to embroil Ghislaine. Jack Scarola, the Florida lawyer acting for Edwards, said: 'Whether and to what extent Ms Maxwell assisted in procuring young girls for Jeffrey Epstein and her knowledge of and participation in their victimisation

are likely to be a focus of attention in the pending proceedings against Jeffrey Epstein.'

Scarola's defence of Edwards has already had consequences few could have foreseen. Epstein's address book was declared part of the evidence and a copy was duly appended to the court documents. This

left Epstein's contacts, including Prince Andrew, in a situation where their personal telephone numbers, email addresses and other details were visible on the internet. One can only imagine the gnashing of royal teeth – and frantic changing of phone numbers – that involved. Although she has not been contacted by police or anyone involved in a criminal investigation, it has, of course, been highly embarrassing for Ghislaine.

So how is she taking it? Even old friends have been unable to persuade her to speak. She's hired a company that specialises in 'reputation management' and 'crisis communications'. Its spokesman told us that she had no comment, but she's been quoted as saying, 'The allegations against me are abhorrent and entirely untrue and I ask that they stop. A number of newspapers have shown a complete lack of accuracy in their reporting of this story and a failure to carry out the most elementary investigation or any real due diligence. I am now taking action to clear my name.' Since the Prince Andrew/Epstein story broke in late February, photographers who cover the Manhattan social circuit say they

haven't seen her. Yet few doubt that she will soon be back. Sarnoff remarked: 'New York society will forgive anything if you are wealthy or have access to money. As long as Ghislaine has it, she will be accepted.' Her old chum Kate Braine, the artist and jewellery designer, thought Ghislaine's resilience would see her through. She said: 'It's lucky her character is 100 per cent Tigger and 0 per cent Eeyore!' □



Below, from left, with Steve Wyatt; with her father, Robert Maxwell, and the Queen, 1983. Above, Ghislaine in *Tatler*, October 1997

