

Lodge terrorised NY family, court told

Surveillance footage of Matthew Lodge assaulting a Manhattan father will be part of a \$US2.2 million civil lawsuit filed against the former NRL prop.

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Around 4am on October 16 last year New York photographer Joseph Cartright, his wife Ruth Fowler and their nine-year-old son were asleep in their Upper-West Side apartment.

The intercom buzzed two or three times.

"It's not rare," Mr Cartright told Judge Ronald Ellis in the US District Court in lower Manhattan on Thursday.

Residents in the close-knit building often sought help from neighbours after misplacing their keys on a night out.

Mr Cartright got out of bed, opened the front door of his ground level unit and walked across the small foyer to the front door.

Standing outside was Carolin Dekeyser and another woman who Mr Cartright recognised as friends of one of his neighbours.

He let them in, but suddenly a third person appeared.

It was Matthew Lodge, the 193cm tall, 110kg, 21-year-old who at the time was a prop for Sydney NRL club Wests Tigers.

He had allegedly accosted Ms Dekeyser and her friend on the street and followed them to the intercom.

"Mr Lodge burst through the door, which took me off guard completely," Mr Cartright, who stands about 185cm tall and had never met Lodge before, testified.

"... To me he was huge.

"Not just in height, but width."

Lodge, in New York on a holiday, then allegedly told Mr Cartright: "This is the night you are going to die."

Mr Cartright, Ms Fowler and Ms Dekeyser have filed a \$US2.2 million civil lawsuit against Lodge, with \$US1 million of that for emotional distress.

Mr Cartright said his son has trouble sleeping, suffers from night terrors and is in therapy.

The family was forced to move from their apartment because of the traumatic memories.

Mr Cartright told the judge how Lodge "bolted" into his family's open apartment door, smashed \$US4,500 worth of furniture, plates and other items and bizarrely kept saying "I'm Matthew Lodge. My lawyer will take care of this. Salaam Alaikum. I come in peace".

Lodge injured Mr Cartright when he put him in a headlock, punched him in the head and face and threw him across the foyer "as if I was a ball", the court heard.

Surveillance footage, released by the Manhattan law firm Wigdor, depicts the ferocity of the attack on Mr Cartright.

Ms Fowler said she told her son to hide behind a bed and eventually they huddled in their bathroom with just a flimsy door and lock to protect them.

Lodge locked Mr Cartright out of the apartment, went to the bathroom door and punched a hole in it, she said.

Ms Fowler protected her son.

"He said to me, 'This is really, really scary' and I said, 'You're right buddy. This is scary,'" she said.

When NYPD officers arrived Lodge threw a bottle of wine at them, they drew their guns and Mr Cartright feared the police would shoot the Australian in front of his son.

Ms Dekeyser and Lodge were not in court on Thursday.

Lodge has failed to respond to the lawsuit since it was filed in December, although Renan Varghese, lawyer for Mr Cartright, Ms Fowler and Ms Dekeyser, said Lodge did unexpectedly call his law firm two weeks ago.

Mr Varghese said Lodge said he did not have a lawyer, was no longer playing rugby league and did not have a source of income.

If Judge Ellis does award a judgment, the lawyers could pursue Lodge's assets in Australia and future earnings.

Judge Ellis will give Lodge 30 days to respond to the proceedings.

West's Tigers sacked Lodge shortly after the New York incident, but he is reportedly hoping to return to the NRL.

In the criminal case filed by New York prosecutors, Lodge has entered a guilty plea to a misdemeanor reckless assault charge and will be sentenced in December.