

## Jackson friend claims Paternity

Mark Lester, a former child star and long-time friend of Michael Jackson, says he could be the father of one of the late pop star's children.

Speaking to the News Of The World, Lester said he had donated sperm to the King of Pop and was willing to take a paternity test.

"I believe Paris could be my daughter," he said, and noted she bore a physical resemblance to his daughter, Harriet.

Calls to Lester's home in Cheltenham were not immediately returned.

The 51-year-old, who rose to fame playing Oliver Twist in the 1968 film of the stage musical, had been friends with Jackson for nearly 30 years.

He is godfather to Paris, 11, and Jackson's two other children, 12-year-old Prince, and Prince Michael II, seven.

Jackson suffered a cardiac arrest at his Los Angeles home on 25 June at the age of 50.

His mother, Katherine, became the permanent guardian of his three children last week.

### Welfare concerns

In a video on the News Of The World website, Lester said he had come forward at this time "because I have concerns about the welfare and upbringing of the children". Watch video: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/8192057.stm>

"There's a contact issue," he added. "I dearly want to remain in contact with those kids and I feel now this is the only way that I can ensure that."

The former actor, who now works as an osteopath, also detailed how the arrangement with Jackson had come to pass.

"Michael Jackson asked me in a private conversation if I would be willing to donate sperm on his behalf," he said.

"I was phoned up by a London clinic and I was asked what would be a convenient time for me to attend. I made an appointment to go along."

Lester said he assumed the mother of the child would be Debbie Rowe, Jackson's then-wife.

There has previously been speculation that Jackson's dermatologist, Arnold Klein, was the father to his two children with Rowe.

The star's third child was born to a surrogate mother, whose identity was never revealed.

"Of all of Michael's children, I would assume that the one who looks most like me is Paris," Lester said.

"Paris has blue eyes, pale complexion and high cheekbones. My girls all have very similar features."

There has been no comment on Lester's claims from the Jackson family.