Witness: David Thoennes

Date: 2004-12-06

Proceedings held December 6, 2004

Called by: Defense

Phase: Penalty

Examinations: Direct – Mark Geragos

Day 1 of 1 for this witness

Court: San Mateo County Superior Court, Redwood City (People v. Scott Peterson)

Source: https://pwc-sii.com/CourtDocs/Transcripts/Thoennes.htm

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Direct Examination by Mark Geragos

GERAGOS: Good morning, Mr. Thoennes.

THOENNES: Good morning.

GERAGOS: You, as Doctor Threatt just mentioned, you were a coach and teacher at Uni High?

THOENNES: Correct.

GERAGOS: And my understanding is that you taught there as well in world history, is that right?

THOENNES: Yes.

GERAGOS: And computer and typing?

THOENNES: Correct.

GERAGOS: How did you come to Uni High, to teach at Uni High?

THOENNES: I was released from active duty in the Navy as a Lieutenant in 1964. Hard to find a job in teaching in November. But I went up to Uni to see if maybe they needed substitute teachers, or anything, and was hired and began in late November of 1964.

GERAGOS: Did you start as a teacher there or as a coach?

THOENNES: As a teacher.

GERAGOS: As a teacher. At some point they appointed or anointed you basketball coach for JV basketball?

THOENNES: I was freshman and Junior Varsity basketball coach for eight or nine years.

GERAGOS: At some point did you become a coach of the golf team as well?

THOENNES: Yes. The golf, in 1967 the golf coach retired or resigned, and I was appointed golf coach at that point.

GERAGOS: At that point had you ever golfed yourself?

THOENNES: Very little.

GERAGOS: Did you end up having to teach yourself how to golf in order to become a golf coach?

THOENNES: Yes.

GERAGOS: You also just recently had heart surgery, is that correct?

THOENNES: Correct. Six weeks ago.

GERAGOS: And you decided to come up anyway, is that correct? You wanted to testify?

THOENNES: Yes. I felt that I owed Scott's parents, and Scott.

GERAGOS: Okay. Do you remember when you first met Scott?

THOENNES: I never had Scott in class, but our first contact was when he tried out for the golf team his freshman year.

GERAGOS: Okay. When he tried out for the golf team his freshman year, did he make it?

THOENNES: Yes.

GERAGOS: And were you struck, or what were your first impressions of him?

THOENNES: I don't remember a whole lot about his freshman year. I know that he played in a few matches his freshman year. From his sophomore year on, he was, junior and senior year he was a starter, and most valuable player in his junior and senior year.

GERAGOS: At some point on that team, I know you have been modest about it when I talked to you. That team, during those four years that he was on the team, produced quite some quite good golfers, did it not?

THOENNES: In fact there is, yes. I had three Southern California State Champions. In the girls division is Christy Erb, in the girls division. Phil Mickelson and Manny Zerma in the boys division.

GERAGOS: Some of those went on to the, and still do play professionally, correct?

THOENNES: Yes.

GERAGOS: I had asked you yesterday, because I was candid with you, I don't play golf. But I have often heard to some degree, you can, if you play a lot with somebody, you can tell several things about people's character, the personality trait. Would you agree with that?

THOENNES: I agree wholeheartedly with that.

GERAGOS: Would you say that you spent a considerable amount of time with Scott Peterson over those years that you were his coach?

THOENNES: During the golf season, definitely. I also got to know Lee Peterson pretty well. He would, before Scott was able to drive, Lee was always down there to pick him up. He came early. And Lee and I played together quite a bit during that time. Also, Scott and his mom and dad were gracious enough to invite me out to their club to play on several occasions, so I got to know all of them pretty well. And I think I am able to judge character pretty much with Scott.

GERAGOS: Could I ask you, when you saw him, I guess the best way, you, at some point, instituted during that four years when he was there, naming a captain of the team. Is that correct?

THOENNES: Correct.

GERAGOS: Who was the first captain that you ever named?

THOENNES: Scott.

GERAGOS: You were the one who appointed him captain?

THOENNES: Yes.

GERAGOS: Why was that?

THOENNES: Our campus was very close to the course that we played, Stardust Country Club. And the students would be let out early to get down and warm up before a match. And in the, I normally stayed until the end of school. By the time I got down to the course, the other team had

arrived. Scott kind of took it on his own to kind of get the guys organized and get things done, so when I got there, there wasn't a lot of responsibility that I had Scott kind of taking care of.

GERAGOS: Did the, you would see him, you would see him, play with him either, coach him, all of the interaction, did you ever, what kind of impression did you have of him?

THOENNES: Scott Peterson was an excellent player, I guess, number one. I never saw Scott lose his temper. A golfer with a tendency to hit a bad shot, and that's when their real personality starts coming out. Scott was able to, if he hit a bad shot he went on, played the next one. He accepted responsibility for what he had done and continued on.

GERAGOS: Did he show you respect?

THOENNES: Absolutely.

GERAGOS: In what kind of ways?

THOENNES: Respect is kind of a hard thing to define. Scott give his respect to anyone. We played in a league with a lot of inner city schools. And some of the players that Scott had to play against were really poor players. Scott was shooting in the thirties, they would be shooting in the sixties. You can become very impatient in a situation like that. I never saw any impatience out of Scott. I never saw him throw a club, yell, scream.

GERAGOS: Would he become, when you say he wouldn't be impartial, would he go out of his way to do positive things with these kids who may not have been as skilled as he was, teach them anything, and things of that nature?

THOENNES: More so with his teammates, helping them on the driving range, on the putting green, those type of things.

GERAGOS: Did you see him interact with his parents as well?

THOENNES: Yes.

GERAGOS: And can you tell me, was he respectful or devoted to them?

THOENNES: I would say he was devoted to them. A lot of kids would go out on the weekends on their own. Scott played golf with his parents. Very devoted.

GERAGOS: I asked you yesterday about, I assume you have seen and coached over the, how many years were you there?

THOENNES: I was at University of San Diego High School for 39 years. I coached for 32 years on the golf team.

GERAGOS: Do you mentally, at least, put down on paper somewhere, at least in your brain, your kind of top ten students or players of your career?

THOENNES: Yes. I established what I call my All Star Team, and Scott is on that all star team. Still is. After 32 years of coaching with an average of 14 kids on a team, I don't know what that comes out to, but Scott is in the top ten of those. And not only does your score count to get into that, but your attitude toward the team, your assistance to the team, just your overall personality.

GERAGOS: I assume that he made your All Star Team?

THOENNES: Yes.

GERAGOS: Well before any of this happened, is that correct?

THOENNES: Yes.

GERAGOS: If I were to ask you, is he also in your top ten, notwithstanding his aptitude for golf or ability to play golf? Just in terms of what kind of young man he was, would he also make the

top ten?

THOENNES: Absolutely.

GERAGOS: You know you are here today, you know why we're here today. I assume that you perceived some great promise in Scott as his coach.

THOENNES: Yes. He's one of the finest young men that I coached. And I knew he would be a success in whatever he did.

GERAGOS: Is it, has it caused you great pain, what's happened here?

THOENNES: Yes. Unbelievable to me.

GERAGOS: Why is that?

THOENNES: Just can't imagine anything like this from the young man that I knew.

GERAGOS: The jury has been, is being asked to put him to death. Do you have a reaction to that?

THOENNES: I'm definitely against it.

GERAGOS: Thank you. I have no further questions.