Witness: Tim Helton

Date: 2004-06-17

Proceedings held June 17, 2004

Called by: People (prosecution)

Phase: Guilt

Examinations: Direct (resumed) – Rick Distaso, resumed; Cross – Mark Geragos; Redirect – Rick Distaso; Recross – Mark Geragos

Day 2 of 2 for this witness

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

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June 17, 2004

Direct Examination by Rick Distaso, resumed

DISTASO: Sergeant Helton, yesterday when we finished off, I wanted to ask you about one additional subject. Were you involved in the part of the investigation of the burglary at the Medinas' residence across the street from the Petersons?

HELTON: I was.

DISTASO: You were not the primary investigating officer of that burglary?

HELTON: No, I was not.

DISTASO: I think that was Detective Stough?

HELTON: Detective Stough.

DISTASO: Did your team respond with a Sergeant Cloward's team to the location on Tenaya to recover some of the property that was there?

HELTON: We did.

DISTASO: And were you also present when two individuals, or while you were there, were two individuals arrested for that burglary?

HELTON: They were.

DISTASO: And who were those people?

HELTON: Glenn Pearce and Steven Todd.

DISTASO: And can you just tell the jury just, you wrote a report on that, right?

HELTON: I did.

DISTASO: Just tell the jury what happened about that. You got a call, or someone told you, hey, you need take your team down and go, and go to this location, right?

HELTON: Correct.

DISTASO: What happened after that?

HELTON: We identified two residences that were possibly associated with the burglary on Covena. And we divided our team into two, in fact, teams to go out and contact these residences. The one I was concerned with was 1406 Tenaya in Modesto. And Mike Hicks was our case agent

in that investigation.

DISTASO: Okay. And what happened?

HELTON: We went to the residence. Officer Hicks made contact at the front door with the property owner, obtained a consent to search the residence, and we proceeded to search the residence.

DISTASO: Did the teams go through and search the entire property there?

HELTON: We did.

DISTASO: Did you find property that you, either you or someone later determined was related to the Medina burglary?

HELTON: We did.

DISTASO: Were you also involved in the recovery of the Medina safe?

HELTON: I was.

DISTASO: Can you tell the jury about that?

HELTON: Officer Hicks had been inside the residence conducting interviews, and also outside the residence, and came around to the side where I was, and instructed me to follow him.

DISTASO: Wait, let me, so who was being he talking to?

HELTON: Glenn Pearce and Steven Todd.

DISTASO: Go ahead.

HELTON: At that point I followed him to the side yard near the garage, and there was a, for lack of better description, like a wooden trunk laying there. He reached and overturned it, and the safe was beneath it.

DISTASO: And the safe was a, can you describe the condition of it?

HELTON: It had been forced open. If I remember correctly, it was that off-white colored safe.

DISTASO: Okay. When you say forced open, I mean did it look like somebody had taken a sledge hammer, or something, to it?

HELTON: It was damaged.

DISTASO: And what happened next then? What other, if anything, about this, your involvement in this particular investigation?

HELTON: We followed up on a young lady by the name of Lisa Stringfellow who had shown up at the residence, or been at the residence when we arrived. She is the sister of Steven Todd. We subsequently went to her residence and also recovered a weed eater that we believe was taken in the Medina burglary.

DISTASO: Was that weed eater later taken back to the Medinas', and they said, yes, that's our property?

HELTON: That I'm not familiar with.

DISTASO: And what property at, your report references a, from the home there where Steven Todd and Pearce, you recovered several pieces of jewelry, a safe, and a wooden box?

HELTON: That's correct.

DISTASO: That was all I had, your Honor.

Cross Examination by Mark Geragos

GERAGOS: Is it Sergeant?

HELTON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Good morning.

HELTON: Good morning.

GERAGOS: Go back to couple of things that Mr. Distaso was asking you about yesterday. One of which was this, there was a tip where you went to somewhere up by the Alameda County line; is that correct?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: Okay. And if I understood correctly, and this is, I'm referencing the, is that 3025 of your Bates numbered stamped report?

HELTON: That would be one of them, yes.

GERAGOS: That is the one we were talking about yesterday, or that you were talking about with Mr. Distaso yesterday?

HELTON: Yes. 3021 through 3028 I believe is the last number.

GERAGOS: Okay. And if I understand correctly, from what was yesterday, the same report, the same thing?

HELTON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. Now, there was a tip that somebody had received that Laci Peterson was being held at a location in the south Tracy area; is that correct?

HELTON: In the Tracy area. It was a little vague.

GERAGOS: Okay. Now, we have got a map of California here your compatriot brought in yesterday, marked as People's 61. You show me, or point out to the jury, there is a pointer there, where the Tracy area is?

HELTON: Tracy is right here.

GERAGOS: And how far away is that from Modesto?

HELTON: In excess of 40 miles. As far as exactly, couldn't tell you.

GERAGOS: And that's a rural area?

HELTON: It's a little of both.

GERAGOS: Okay. And my understanding is that the tip was is that she was being held in a rural residence with two white houses, a white broken down pickup truck in front of one of the houses, and a storage container in the rear, and that she was being held in the rear of the residence, and was being abused; is that correct?

HELTON: I think it's actually that she was being held in the storage container. I would have to look real quick.

GERAGOS: Sure. If that will refresh your recollection. I assume you are looking at 3025 and 3056?

HELTON: That's correct. And that victim Peterson was being held in the storage container to the rear of the residence.

GERAGOS: Okay. And so what ended up happening is that they, you didn't have an exact address, you had just a vague description of an area; is that correct?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: So you went out, responded to, you deployed people to this one area that was at the Alameda-San Joaquin County line?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: That is technically in Alameda County, correct?

HELTON: It's a real close division right there.

GERAGOS: That would be the same area that you were pointing to before, right in here?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: And at that point, you contacted, or somebody contacted the Alameda County Sheriff, correct?

HELTON: Officer Beffa did.

GERAGOS: Officer Beffa, B-e-f-f-a, is an officer from Modesto PD, correct?

HELTON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And at that point, there was an area that they described, the Alameda County Sheriff described as being kind of a hot bed for illegal activities, correct?

HELTON: That's correct.

DISTASO: Objection, your Honor. That's vague. Calls for speculation.

JUDGE: I'm going to sustain the objection.

GERAGOS: Well, it's referred to as,

JUDGE: Jury can disregard.

GERAGOS: Known to have illegal activity occurring?

DISTASO: That's the same objection.

JUDGE: Sustained.

GERAGOS: How you did refer to the area in the report?

DISTASO: Objection. It's just not relevant.

GERAGOS: Was brought up by the DA specifically.

JUDGE: He didn't bring out whether it was a high crime area. Sustain the objection.

GERAGOS: You went to the area, correct?

HELTON: I did not, no.

GERAGOS: Did you send somebody there?

HELTON: I did.

GERAGOS: Okay. When they arrived, they used some heat sensors to see if there was any activity in the area, correct? An aircraft, a helicopter, specifically?

HELTON: A heat sensor, yes.

GERAGOS: They found that there was self, buildings radiating heat, correct?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: Due to the weather conditions they couldn't tell if there was any storage containers there, right?

HELTON: That I don't know. I think what it references that there were several outbuildings.

GERAGOS: Okay. Specifically see if this refreshes your recollection here.

JUDGE: You are showing him what, Mr. Geragos?

GERAGOS: 3026.

HELTON: Due to the conditions, they couldn't determine if there were any outbuildings or any storage containers.

GERAGOS: And then somebody from Alameda was contacted, and they were, Alameda County advised that you should not attempt to contact the individuals because they are known parolees and probation persons who are anti-law enforcement; is that correct?

DISTASO: Objection. That calls for hearsay. That doesn't go to what with his actions were.

JUDGE: That can come in, because I think, again, it goes to the reasonableness of his conduct and conduct of the police department investigating this crime. Go ahead?

HELTON: The way I understand it, Deputy Mears contacted them, and they said they should be contacted during daylight hours.

GERAGOS: Right, because why?

HELTON: Because of the fact known probationers and parolees are there in the past.

GERAGOS: Who were anti-law enforcement?

HELTON: That's the way it reads, yes, sir.

GERAGOS: And that if you were going to go in there, you should do it with a special search team, correct?

HELTON: I believe that's correct, yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. That was not done as far as you know, was it?

HELTON: As far as I know, no.

GERAGOS: So as far as we know, that particular tip about Laci Peterson being held there was in a storage container. They did a fly-over, they did determine that there was heat radiating from this area, which would indicate, or be consistent with some kind of live human beings being there; is that correct?

HELTON: Not necessarily human beings. It could just be a heat source also in those buildings.

GERAGOS: As far as you know, nobody ever went in there with a special search team, or ever followed up on that?

HELTON: Not to my knowledge, no.

GERAGOS: Now, the, take you back to one of the other things that was referred to yesterday by Mr. Distaso. That was specifically the searches you were doing, I guess, if I understand it correctly, you substitute in on days that the other sergeant was absent; is that correct?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: Okay. Do you remember what days that was?

HELTON: As far as specifically days where I was alone, the only one that I'm familiar with was January 1st. For the most part Sergeant Cloward and I were there the majority of the time together. And I would deploy to the field, and he would stay with the Command Post.

GERAGOS: Okay. When were you there on January 1st, the Command Post, we have already heard testimony, was set up in the park; is that correct?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: Okay. And at that time, at that point were there people coming in to the Command Post, civilians would come in, or approach?

HELTON: Upon occasion, yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. On January 1st had, the candlelight vigil had already occurred?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: And who was actually responsible for entering information into the logs, if you will, at the Command Post?

HELTON: It would vary. Upon occasion Detective Hermosa was in charge of the Command Post. Upon occasion Sergeant Johnson was in charge of the Command Post. Upon occasions it would be Sergeant Cloward San. Who their scribes were that day, I'm not familiar with. Like I said, with the exception of January 1st, most of my time was spent in the field.

GERAGOS: Most of your time was spent,

HELTON: In the field.

GERAGOS: Okay. On January 4th you were out at the lake, Tulloch Lake?

HELTON: Tulloch Lake.

GERAGOS: You had cadaver dogs alerted out there?

HELTON: There were search dogs out there, yes.

GERAGOS: Point the jury to where that is specifically that you worked on the 4th?

HELTON: Covered right in this area.

GERAGOS: Is there a pin sticking in there?

HELTON: There are several pins sticking in that area.

GERAGOS: What color?

HELTON: Pink, green, and an off-brown.

GERAGOS: Okay. And were there dive teams that were put there?

HELTON: Yes, there were.

GERAGOS: How many, approximately how many dogs alerted there?

HELTON: If I remember correctly, three.

GERAGOS: Okay. And how many dive teams did you send to that location?

HELTON: This two dive teams, one from Calaveras County, correction. Actually three dive teams, intermittent. Stanislaus County, Calaveras County and Tuolumne County.

GERAGOS: Obviously you didn't find anything of any evidentiary value to this case?

HELTON: No, we did not.

GERAGOS: Then on January 5th, did you go back again to Tulloch Lake?

HELTON: We did.

GERAGOS: Again did you have dive teams?

HELTON: We did.

GERAGOS: And at that point the divers searched but didn't come up with anything of any evidentiary value, correct?

HELTON: No, they did not.

GERAGOS: January 6th, did you go back and/or do another search of Tulloch?

HELTON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And who did you have at that search?

HELTON: As far as divers specifically, I couldn't tell you.

GERAGOS: Just numbers.

HELTON: There were two dive teams, if not three dive teams on-site.

GERAGOS: Fair statement that you didn't obtain anything of any evidentiary value?

HELTON: No, we did not.

GERAGOS: Now, the, were you in the, you had mentioned also that you were part of this equestrian unit; is that correct?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: Okay. Were you actually doing searches prior to this? I know you indicated January 1st you subbed in for the other sergeant. Did you, were you involved in searches prior to January 1st?

HELTON: I was.

GERAGOS: Okay. Going back to the 25th, or Christmas day?

HELTON: Correct.

GERAGOS: And was that in the park?

HELTON: It was.

GERAGOS: Okay. Was that also with sergeant, is it Beffa?

HELTON: It is Sergeant Beffa.

GERAGOS: Two of you searching on the 25th?

HELTON: We did.

GERAGOS: Were you with Sergeant Beffa when he ran into a witness who had seen a dog fitting the description of McKenzie on, with the collar and the leash barking wildly by the creek?

HELTON: No.

DISTASO: Objection, your Honor. That assumes facts not in evidence.

JUDGE: There is testimony yesterday about a dog.

DISTASO: He said a large yellow dog.

JUDGE: Change it to large yellow dog.

GERAGOS: Did he alert you to that information?

HELTON: No, I was not familiar with that.

GERAGOS: Did you, on the 25th, run into any other witnesses who had seen Laci down in the park, or had identified the fact that they had seen Laci or the dog in the park?

HELTON: No, I did not.

GERAGOS: Did you talk to Beffa about his interviews with witnesses?

HELTON: No.

GERAGOS: Were you two, you were not partnered up in the day on the 25th?

HELTON: When we spoke initially and decided whether to start the search was back at the footpath. From there I was working horseback and he was on foot.

GERAGOS: Okay. So the two of you started the day together, but you were not, while he's canvassing the area, you are somewhere else?

HELTON: Correct.

GERAGOS: So you don't know what he was doing, he doesn't know what you were doing?

HELTON: No.

GERAGOS: You have 2715 in front of,

HELTON: Date probably help me more.

GERAGOS: 12-25-02. Looks like Nicolai's report.

HELTON: Correct.

GERAGOS: You can use mine if you want, if that will help out?

HELTON: I think it's this one.

GERAGOS: One, two, three, fourth paragraph down?

HELTON: Yes, sir. Go ahead.

GERAGOS: Does that refresh your recollection as to some of the activity during that day on the 25th?

HELTON: It does.

GERAGOS: Okay. Is it an accurate statement that you received information that the victim, and that would have been Laci Peterson, correct?

HELTON: Correct.

GERAGOS: Had been seen on the north side of the creek near one of the footbridges?

HELTON: Correct.

GERAGOS: Now, I believe that we have got here somewhere a map, see if I can find it, that shows the park. I think this is People's 22. Would you point out for the jury where that area is that is referenced in this report where Laci was seen on the north side of the creek near one the footbridges? To get your bearings, if it helps, this has already been identified as the Covena house.

HELTON: Right.

GERAGOS: This would be the trailhead going into the park?

HELTON: Here is the footbridge that we're talking about right through here in the treeline. It's pretty tough to see. And then it goes up and extends to the west, and meets up with Scenic Drive. And this is Coffee Road right here. This is the north area of the footbridge that we were talking about.

GERAGOS: Can you, could you mark that as to the area that you went to?

DISTASO: Actually, Sergeant Helton, could you just circle the footbridge, if that's all right with you?

GERAGOS: Sure. That's even better. Just write "Footbridge" there.

JUDGE: Sergeant, just circle, draw a line out from it, and write "bridge" at the. End otherwise everybody is going to be writing on all the stuff that's there.

GERAGOS: Okay. Now, this, the information that was received, and I know that, I assume that while you were out there searching, some of these days blur together. So when I was asking you before did you meet up with Beffa, you didn't have a clear memory of that; is that correct?

HELTON: No, I do have a clear memory of that as far as the conversations concerning the dog, no.

GERAGOS: Okay. You did have a conversation in which a witness reported seeing in this area where you have marked with the footbridge, correct?

HELTON: Correct.

GERAGOS: Okay. And that is approximately how far from this area here where Covena dead ends, and there is the trail goes down?

HELTON: Probably a quarter mile or less.

GERAGOS: Okay. And when you, then is there also, I think you had indicated, get in the way of some of the jurors over there, that this area here goes straight to what street?

HELTON: That's Scenic Drive there.

GERAGOS: Is there a footpath that runs along,

HELTON: Actually a paved path that comes from the park up to the roadway.

GERAGOS: Okay. And that paved path that goes up to the roadway there by Scenic, was that the area that you searched that day when you received that information?

HELTON: Correct.

GERAGOS: Now, there were several encampments right in that area as well; isn't that correct? I'll show you the last paragraph on 2715, if you have it. If you could read that silently to yourself.

HELTON: Yes, sir.

GERAGOS: Okay. Does that refresh your recollection as to some encampments being there along the side of the creek?

HELTON: Where Officer Nicolai went, which was a much steeper incline than I was on with the horse, there probably was. There could have been.

GERAGOS: Okay. Could you point to the jury roughly where that is?

HELTON: This area right in here is pretty flat. It's really accessible. When you get down here in the tree line, it gets really steep where it goes down to the creek.

GERAGOS: And so when you were pointing to the encampment areas that are steep that would be basically right by where the footbridge is; is that correct?

HELTON: Pretty close.

GERAGOS: Now, the, you have 2384 in front of you?

HELTON: A date?

GERAGOS: 2384 is a 1-2, January 2nd report.

HELTON: No, I'm sorry, I don't.

GERAGOS: Okay. Would you mind taking a look at mine?

HELTON: Sure.

GERAGOS: Would you read after 0800 hours, those paragraphs there?

HELTON: I do have it. Just another page back.

DISTASO: Which report is that?

HELTON: It's mine.

GERAGOS: Sergeant Helton's.

HELTON: Yes, sir.

GERAGOS: Okay. Does that refresh your recollection as to what was going on on the search on the day of the second?

HELTON: It does.

GERAGOS: Okay. Is it a fair statement that at about eight in the morning you had responded to East La Loma Park?

HELTON: Yes, it is.

GERAGOS: There is picture that's represented by the aerial view there.

HELTON: It is.

GERAGOS: Okay. And is it a fair statement that there were, you deployed, I guess, there. You were head of the equestrian unit, if I understand correctly?

HELTON: Yes, I am.

GERAGOS: Two people working for you, McDaniels and Silva?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: Okay. And did you deploy them on the river bottom area?

HELTON: I did.

GERAGOS: Okay. Can you show the jury where the river bottom, or describe what that is?

HELTON: We're actually talking about the area that's west of this aerial photograph. You get double into the Tuolumne River region, the confluence of Dry Creek meets with the Tuolumne River. There is another second area that is not visible on this aerial.

GERAGOS: Okay. Now, the purpose of going into that river bottom area was to contact transients that were living on the river bottom, correct?

HELTON: Correct.

GERAGOS: And to locate what you referred to as 290 registrants. That TPU, what does TPU,

HELTON: Tactical Patrol Unit.

GERAGOS: That would be the unit that you were substituting in for. Maybe it wasn't, who is the head of the TPU?

HELTON: Actually Sergeant Cloward had one team of six officers, and I had the other team of six officers.

GERAGOS: You were trying to run down the sex offenders which you called 290 registrants?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: And you were looking or attempting to find them in this area of the East La Loma Park?

HELTON: East La Loma Park. I think I kind of exhausted that area and expanded, like I said, to the river bottom, which is the area I'm trying to describe now.

GERAGOS: And then you also were trying to locate the people that had given the Gospel Mission on Yosemite as their address, that were not there, correct?

HELTON: Typically that's where they are.

GERAGOS: When you say typically, that's kind of the congregation, or where they congregate?

HELTON: Well, we have a number homeless people that live on the river bottom and give the Gospel Mission as their address.

GERAGOS: Those are registered sex offenders?

HELTON: Some are, yes.

GERAGOS: Now, the reward, the $1,000 reward for information concerning the burglary on Covena, that was something that you specifically asked Letsinger to concern himself with; is that correct?

HELTON: I went to the squad meeting that day at noon and addressed the entire squad, but specifically Officer Letsinger, because he was working the area concerned with the burglary.

GERAGOS: I don't have it with me, and I apologize. But there was a flyer that was put out by Modesto PD, correct?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: That flyer identified a thousand dollar reward. Same reward that we're talking about here?

HELTON: Correct.

GERAGOS: And it also identified some information, correct?

HELTON: That I don't know. And I don't have it as well.

GERAGOS: Now, the information that you received in regards to the burglary, who did that come from? I know you indicated you weren't the investigating officer, but somebody else was handling that?

HELTON: Initially a confidential informant who spoke to Detective Stough.

GERAGOS: Okay. Is there also, prior to that, however, prior to getting the confidential informant's information, an eye-witness account that went in to making up of the flyer?

HELTON: That I'm not familiar with.

GERAGOS: Do you know who made up the flyer?

HELTON: No, I don't, sir.

GERAGOS: I'm going to show you, this is 14765, see if you were ever provided the information that's contained on this tip sheet.

HELTON: No, I was not.

GERAGOS: Okay. You do you know who headed up the investigation of the burglary on Covena?

HELTON: The only one I'm familiar with was Detective Stough.

GERAGOS: Detective Stough?

HELTON: Yes. S-t-o-u-g-h.

GERAGOS: Now, you also talked about, I think it was you. Didn't you talk about finding some intestines, or something, at some point?

HELTON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And where was that?

HELTON: Fox Grove at Geer Road, which is east of the city limits by about eight miles.

GERAGOS: Okay. That had nothing to do with the search that you were doing down at the park, correct?

HELTON: No.

GERAGOS: Now, the other tips that you were following up, were you monitoring the tips that were coming into the Modesto PD, or were you specifically trying to do grid searches?

HELTON: For the most past grid searches.

GERAGOS: And I went over some of this with your counterpart. I just want to see if it was kind, mandate was kind of the same. You were filling in for him when he was in charge of the search effort; is that correct?

HELTON: Actually what it was, as I would be the one in charge of it. When he was absent, there were a couple of days that he was off, the one specifically January 1st. And then at that point I would man the Command Post, be around. For the most part, I was in the field, and he was at the Command Post.

GERAGOS: Okay. Is it fair to say that the investigators were not sharing information with you on a regular basis. You were, your kind of mission or mandate was to just go through and exhaust the various areas of searches?

HELTON: That's the areas of searches. But we communicated on a regular basis if not briefing, in the morning, during the course of the day.

GERAGOS: Now, the areas, or how many times would you say that your searches actually, you were actually involved in the searches themselves?

HELTON: Just approximately, just approximate, ten to twelve.

GERAGOS: Okay. One of the areas that you searched, I assume, because the Stanislaus River from the Oakdale Recreation Area?

HELTON: Myself or my team?

GERAGOS: Yourself or your team?

HELTON: My team did, as well as we also were contacted. And I would have to look back at one of the state agencies that checked that area.

GERAGOS: And what was the process by which, after you were summoned to the search, would you go back and verify it in some way? How would you make sure that you had done the specific grid area?

HELTON: We would debrief at the end of the day, and the officers would outline which areas they had been to and searched, and areas that still needed to be searched.

GERAGOS: Okay. Now, does there, is it a fair statement that you were looking at that point for locations, for a body, so to speak, as opposed to going from door-to-door, or following it, you weren't the one, or your teams were not the ones, who were following up leads in terms of people, specifically.

HELTON: No. We did both.

GERAGOS: What was the major focus of your effort?

HELTON: Major focus was the rural areas where a body might be located.

GERAGOS: Okay. And was that what you were trying to do is basically grid off all the rural areas?

HELTON: Grid is probably a little specific. A grid search is a little more entailed than an area search.

GERAGOS: Okay. Can you describe for the jury what that entails, this area search?

HELTON: A grid search is, for lack of better description, where you actually line out an area, go through and check it foot-by-foot. An area search is where you would get out and look, and

check areas. But you are not in a line like you will be with a grid search, where you have multiple officers, and check one area like you will for each search. When you are looking for a person, you don't have to get quite that close, have quite that many officers.

GERAGOS: Now, is it also a fair statement that you were looking for, or that you received information about a particular style older model van, that is either white or tan in color, that you are were following up on that as well?

HELTON: We were.

GERAGOS: That continued throughout the time that you were working; isn't that correct?

HELTON: That's correct.

GERAGOS: At least into past January 1st.

HELTON: Certainly, yes.

GERAGOS: And certainly past January, the first week of January?

HELTON: Yes.

GERAGOS: You never found a van that fit the description of the one you were looking for; isn't that correct?

HELTON: Not that I'm aware of, no.

GERAGOS: And do you know who gave, who would have given that information about the van that was in the neighborhood?

HELTON: No, I don't. I'm not familiar with that.

GERAGOS: You just know that was part of one of the high priorities of what you were looking for?

HELTON: Correct.

GERAGOS: The, did you substitute in on any of the, or were you involved in any of the Bay searches?

HELTON: No, I was not.

GERAGOS: And is the equestrian unit also, specifically that you were head of, designed for mostly the rural areas as well?

HELTON: Correct.

GERAGOS: And approximately how many searches would you say you went on?

HELTON: Several days, and dozens.

GERAGOS: Okay. Did you have any interaction with Scott Peterson?

HELTON: No, I did not.

GERAGOS: And did most of your information filter to you from the other sergeant?

HELTON: From the other sergeant and the investigators from --

GERAGOS: Either from Cloward and/or which investigators to you, or to you?

HELTON: On the burglary itself, Detective Grogan, Detective Buehler, Detective Brocchini.

GERAGOS: Thank you. I have no further questions.

Redirect Examination by Rick Distaso

DISTASO: Sergeant Helton, did you even know of Scott Peterson's existence prior to your involvement in this case?

HELTON: No, I did not.

DISTASO: You have had no contact with him at all?

HELTON: Other than seeing him at the Volunteer Center, no.

DISTASO: When you went to the locations, what were the addresses on Tenaya?

HELTON: 1406 and 1407.

DISTASO: Right across from each other?

HELTON: Across the street, one over.

DISTASO: Did you or any member of your team, when it was reported back to you that after they searched those locations, find any evidence at all related to the Laci Peterson case?

HELTON: No, we did not.

DISTASO: And the property owners at those locations gave you consent to search the entire property; is that right?

HELTON: They did.

DISTASO: Counsel asked you about that sighting of Laci up in Tracy, which you talked about. And how many days was officer, Sergeant Beffa, I think, up there searching?

HELTON: Actually was officer. We have a Sergeant and Officer Beffa.

DISTASO: Two different people?

HELTON: Officer Beffa physically responded. And then from there, Deputy Mears of the San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office took the lead and searched for the next three days.

DISTASO: Just so the jury is clear, when you were talking about the river bottom, you are not talking about any of the area located here on People's 26?

HELTON: No.

DISTASO: So where the, and the river bottom, the Tuolumne River, river bottom, is an area where homeless folks do live in Modesto?

HELTON: Yes, they do.

DISTASO: And this map is probably not going to do it. If, let me show you this one. This is a People's 58, the aerial of People's 22, the Dry Creek Park area that's up here on the map; is that right?

HELTON: That's correct.

DISTASO: And then the Dry Creek flows down, and it flows into the Tuolumne River?

HELTON: That's correct.

DISTASO: And you made some, there is some parks along the Tuolumne River as well?

HELTON: There are.

DISTASO: Okay. And so the river bottom area that you have these units go out to, that you were talking about, where would that be on People's 58?

HELTON: Here is where Dry Creek meets with the Tuolumne River confluence. This is the Gallo property. From there it runs to the west and back along a park, and then the golf course.

DISTASO: And where were those officers, where were the equestrian units on the day that counsel was asking you about?

HELTON: On January second they were concentrating on the area where Dry Creek meets with the Tuolumne River to the west, where it again goes to the park. And it's a little more, tougher area to negotiate.

DISTASO: Again, for reference, this is the Dry Creek area, and here is the where the Covena address is, correct?

HELTON: That's correct.

DISTASO: Counsel asked you just about that thing at the Fox Grove area. I think he said where intestines were found. You testified yesterday that the Coroner was called out to that.

HELTON: Deputy Coroner.

DISTASO: Those were determined to be animals?

HELTON: Correct.

DISTASO: The $1,000 reward for the burglary, when you were talking to Officer Letsinger about that, what did you tell him. Counsel asked you something about that. I wasn't clear. What directions did you give him?

HELTON: Basically asked him to contact people in the area, specifically informants and people that he deals with on a regular basis, and try to motivate some movement as far as the burglary, and discovering who did the burglary.

DISTASO: So that's his area of patrol?

HELTON: It was, yes.

DISTASO: At the time? And as police officers patrol areas, they become familiar with the people in that area?

HELTON: Correct.

DISTASO: All right. And so as part of that, they, it's common practice to cultivate relationships with, like you said, informants, or people who might have information?

HELTON: Informants, citizens.

DISTASO: So you just told him when you are out there patrolling, talking to the people you know, tell them, we got this $1,000 reward to solve this burglary?

HELTON: Correct.

DISTASO: And then subsequently, shortly thereafter, information came in?

HELTON: It did.

DISTASO: Counsel was asking you a lot of questions about, was this, what information was provided to you. And just so the jury has some idea, how many officers are in the Modesto Police Department, just roughly?

HELTON: 260.

DISTASO: How many separate units are there?

HELTON: There is a number. Patrol; investigations, which is the detective bureau; our unit, which is it is tactical units; traffic division. There is a number of units.

DISTASO: There is a narcotics unit, and other units as well?

HELTON: That's correct.

DISTASO: And the so the way this investigation was going, it was pulling in a large number of resources from all these different,

GERAGOS: Objection. Leading.

JUDGE: Sustained.

DISTASO: Can you just explain what you know about how this investigation was proceeding?

HELTON: Yes. Staffing was provided from all the units. We had our street level drug unit that was involved in helping with the search and the investigation. Officer Nicolai that Mr. Geragos referred to his report earlier, was part of the traffic unit. Patrol division. We had officers from everywhere assisting.

DISTASO: Nothing further, your Honor.

Recross Examination by Mark Geragos

GERAGOS: Be probably should have used the larger aerial photo that we have marked, sergeant. I'll see if I can find that quickly. Just have you mark a couple of things on it. This is People's 36 which I think is a more expansive view than People's 22?

HELTON: Looks like it is.

GERAGOS: Can you do me a favor. The footbridge is already marked, correct? The one we were talking about?

HELTON: Looks like it is, yes.

GERAGOS: Could you also mark where the Gospel Mission is? Assuming somebody has already written, I don't see it on there. Does that appear to be Yosemite?

HELTON: Yes, it does.

GERAGOS: Okay.

HELTON: I'm writing, Gospel Mission is right here. This large building.

GERAGOS: Can you circle that? Just write it right there. It's approximately, what, from Covena address, one, two, three, four, five, six blocks?

HELTON: Six blocks. They are very large blocks, though. It's probably at a mile.

GERAGOS: About a mile. Thank you. I have no further questions.

DISTASO: I don't have anything else.

JUDGE: Sergeant, thank you very much.