Witness: Conception (Coni) M. Fritz

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Called by: Defense

Phase: Penalty

Examinations: Direct – Pat Harris

Day 1 of 1 for this witness

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Direct Examination by Pat Harris

HARRIS: Good morning, Mrs. Fritz. You go by Coni?

FRITZ: C-o-n-i.

HARRIS: Jury heard yesterday from a gentleman named Aaron Fritz. Is that your son?

FRITZ: Yes. Our oldest son.

HARRIS: I'm going to just take you back briefly into your background a little bit. If you would just tell the jury a little bit about where you grew up and about your eventually coming to California.

FRITZ: Grew up, born and raised in Chicago. Parents are from Mexico. Lived in Chicago until I was 39. Married, and went to Munster, Indiana, which is a sister city. Lived there for another 16 years, where we had the boys. And with a failing steel economy, we had, we were forced to close down our fabricating shop, and came as pioneers to California.

HARRIS: You say you were married at 39. What is your husband's name?

FRITZ: Paul.

HARRIS: And you have two children?

FRITZ: Yes. We have Aaron and Nicholas.

HARRIS: And what's the age difference?

FRITZ: Six years.

HARRIS: Aaron is the oldest?

FRITZ: Yes.

HARRIS: When you came to California, you eventually, after arriving here, did you have a chance to meet a young man named Scott Peterson?

FRITZ: To our pleasure.

HARRIS: And over the time period, after a while your son Aaron became friends with Scott, is that right?

FRITZ: Correct.

HARRIS: Over the time period of their friendship, did you also have a chance to interact with Scott?

FRITZ: Yes.

HARRIS: Where were places where you would see Scott? What are the kinds of things you would end up interacting with him?

FRITZ: Golf course, golf course, and golf course. Boys were on the golf team, and I was a volunteer with the boys at the golf range. Stardust in those days. Around different courses.

HARRIS: Did you also work at the school, the school named Uni?

FRITZ: Uni.

HARRIS: Did you also do volunteer work at the school?

FRITZ: Yes. Mother's day, expected to put in X amount of hours wherever I could. I had another child in grade school, so I was pulled both sides. It was hard.

HARRIS: You also did volunteer work for junior golf?

FRITZ: Yes, especially because both boys,

HARRIS: Would Scott often come to your house as well?

FRITZ: Yes. Scott was, he was a great help in the transportation. Saved me many, many a mile, graciously, with no,

HARRIS: Let's talk about that for a minute. When you moved to California, where did you live?

FRITZ: We lived in Rancho Bernardo, and Aaron went to Uni, which is a hike from Rancho Bernardo. But we knew that, and we were ready to do what we had to do.

HARRIS: When you say it was a hike,

FRITZ: A long trip.

HARRIS: How long of a trip are we talking about?

FRITZ: I would say half hour on a good day, 45 minutes. Then I had to come back to drop Nicholas off at another school.

HARRIS: So in order to take your children to school, you had to do a lot of driving?

FRITZ: Yes.

HARRIS: Spent a good time, amount of your time on the road?

FRITZ: Yes.

HARRIS: Did, during the course of their friendship, did Scott Peterson volunteer to help take care of some of that?

FRITZ: Not so much volunteer. He just did it. He knew it would save me a trip. And just what friends do. You take care of each other. But he took Aaron under his wing. Since we were new to California, Aaron was in his first year in high school, and his golf buddies, and I think Scott was, I believe, a year older in class, year ahead of Aaron. But he became a big brother.

HARRIS: You would visit with him frequently when he came to the house?

FRITZ: Drop off, occasionally a hug and a pot pie.

HARRIS: So he would have dinner with you on occasions?

FRITZ: Yeah.

HARRIS: You had a chance to get to know him. I know you described the first thing you described to me about Scott Peterson was he was a gentle man. What did you mean by that?

FRITZ: He is a gentle man.

HARRIS: What does that mean to you?

FRITZ: To me it means respect, caring, considerate. That's the Scott we know.

HARRIS: Is this something you see also in other people around you?

FRITZ: Being an older parent, we have witnessed a lot of children come and go with the boys. Our house is usually a nucleus for the golf team. And kids come and go. They visit with the boys, which is fine. You know. They are not our peers. But he and couple of the others showed an extraordinary amount of respect for us.

HARRIS: Did you, in fact, develop a friendship with Scott over the years?

FRITZ: I consider myself a friend.

HARRIS: What other types of character traits did you see in him?

FRITZ: A caring, a caring, sweet, loving boy. Somebody that I was proud to have as my son's friend.

HARRIS: When you say he sort of took care of, or took Aaron under his wing, would he help Aaron on different projects and things?

FRITZ: Aaron has a lot of respect for Scott. Scott is an extraordinarily intelligent individual. And I don't know he helped him on school projects, but as a friend, that's more help than anybody could want. Especially when you are new in California, with no friends, walking into a high school, that is a very, very difficult thing. And Aaron handled it and acquired a handful of friends that we are proud to say he still keeps in touch with. Maybe not on a daily or weekly basis, but he's a people collector. And he could call on his friends at any time. I don't think that we had to see him on a week-to-week basis to know that he had great friends.

HARRIS: Talked a little bit about when you met Scott, about his smile. Would you tell me about that?

FRITZ: Scott has a twinkle in his eye. Had a twinkle in his eye and a little side smile. That was what I considered his logo.

HARRIS: What do you mean by his logo?

FRITZ: AT&T has their logo. Scott has that little crooked smile that is his logo. It's part of who he is.

HARRIS: You know, there's at least been some references made that perhaps the smile revealed some arrogance. Did you ever see that?

FRITZ: Never. I'm sure arrogance is not a word that he even knows how to spell, because that is not who he is.

HARRIS: At some point, as the friendship developed, you entrusted your son, entrusted Aaron to travel, go around with Scott. Why was that? Why was that unusual?

FRITZ: Well, it was unusual from the standpoint that we had lost a child, and I, as an overprotective mother, that I was called, which was fine, we seemed to want to put Aaron in a bubble, because the loss of a child is,

HARRIS: Why did you trust Scott with Aaron?

FRITZ: I think because of the respect and, the respect and friendship that he showed, and the giving of himself, as far as dropping Aaron off when it was not expected of him, with nothing in return. I think, I think that kind of means a good friend. They enjoyed each other. They were friends. They are buddies.

HARRIS: Did you see a maturity in Scott that you didn't necessarily see in some of his friends?

FRITZ: Absolutely. That is a maturity. He was possibly 16 going on 30.

HARRIS: The times that you saw Scott with Aaron, you also stated that you had opportunity to talk to them about the volunteer work that they were doing. Could you tell the jury a little bit about that?

FRITZ: Yeah. These two boys are, they are rare among their age group. I'm talking about high school. They would give up Saturdays, many Saturdays. And Aaron, Scott was the one driving. He almost drove all the time. They belonged to a group that was headed by Sister Joan Kiley at Uni. And they did a lot of volunteer work in Tijuana.

HARRIS: What,

FRITZ: Habitat for Humanity type thing. I don't know if that was the name at the time. And they would take,

REPORTER: You are talking on top of each other. Would you repeat the last question and answer?

HARRIS: The last question, was that, the Habitat for Humanity one of these things, is that the name of the type of thing, project that they had taken under their wing,

FRITZ: And were very diligent. Weekends, Saturday were not uncommon for them to give up.

HARRIS: So this was something they did beyond what was required?

FRITZ: This is the volunteer program. Another program was La Cuna, where they would go to the orphanages, interact with children, possibly cuddling, because there is not enough help to go around. And the other one was collecting of clothes and distribution. At different times, not necessarily any designation. I was not part of that. But they, Aaron got permission to go.

HARRIS: Did you see Scott encouraging others to go, to get involved as well?

FRITZ: I think he was, I think he was a leader among them, to make it more important than some kids do it, because they have to put in so many hours. These kids did it because they saw the need for it, and went above and beyond.

HARRIS: Now, you mentioned earlier that you have another son, Nicholas, is that right?

FRITZ: Yes. Nicholas is six years younger.

HARRIS: Six years younger than Aaron?

FRITZ: Yes. And Scott treated him like a little brother. Where Aaron would like to get rid of the young kid, Scott would want to include him. And it was refreshing. It was caring of him. And I appreciated it.

HARRIS: After Aaron went away to college, and Scott went away to college, did Scott continue just to come by and see you on occasion?

FRITZ: Drop in occasionally. We were not his number one. We weren't the reason. But we were connected. And he did drop by San Clemente, which had been our home from Rancho Bernardo. We heard about their, what was going on. Like I say, after a while they lost a daily touch. We still kept in touch as far as,

HARRIS: You were just talking about that he would drop by on occasion. These were times when Aaron wasn't even home, just drop by to see you and your husband?

FRITZ: Correct.

HARRIS: I think I asked you, but in case I didn't. Did you consider this beyond just this is your son's friend? Did you consider him a friend as well?

FRITZ: Yes. On a great level, because how many children you know will drop by to see you without Aaron being home, checking on the older folks.

HARRIS: When he would come by, was it a situation where you felt like he felt there was a genuine respect for you?

FRITZ: Oh, there was always continuous. It was him.

HARRIS: You had the opportunity to see him during, while you were volunteering at the golf tournaments at school, interact with others, his friends, his peers, as well as adults. Did he also show them that respect, those people as well?

FRITZ: Yes. Yes, as what I could view, absolutely.

HARRIS: Now, you had, obviously when Aaron got married, you were present, right?

FRITZ: Correct.

HARRIS: Scott was in the wedding too?

FRITZ: He was part of the wedding. He was a groomsman.

HARRIS: You had, you met Laci before that, was that the first time you met her?

FRITZ: I had met her once before, and only a couple of times. And sweetest, sweetest. She instituted a tequila salute at the wedding.

HARRIS: What was that?

FRITZ: You get a tray with tequila shooters. My background, you know, start off the, start off the celebration.

HARRIS: Why was that important to you?

FRITZ: Well, it was important to me because she had enough sense to know that that was part of a wedding ceremony, or a ritual.

HARRIS: You also had the chance, as I understand it, to, at least, know Jackie and Lee a little bit?

FRITZ: A little bit. They are parents of Scott, and they hosted different golf outings at their home. Very gracious, very giving. Door was always open.

HARRIS: And you had a chance I believe, if I'm right, that at some point during this trial, near the closing, or some point, you had a chance to actually come up here?

FRITZ: Yes. We were up here and couldn't get into the courtroom. But we waited in the hall, had coffee with them, and then went out to lunch with them. And I was amazed at the stamina, the love, the support, the positive vibes that prevailed in this family. It's incredible.

HARRIS: I think you told me it was an amazing family. That is your,

FRITZ: Yes. Yes. And I didn't know any of the family before. I just knew Jackie and Lee spontaneously, through these golf, but the vibes I saw were incredible, positive love flow.

HARRIS: Coni, we talked about the reason you are here today. And obviously we're asking this jury to sentence Scott to a life in jail. You have had a chance to know Scott. If you, based on his personality, based on the Scott that you know, if he is sentenced to a life in jail, do you feel like he can still make a positive contribution?

FRITZ: Scott would make a positive contribution to whatever is dealt to him. And I would say it would be in the form of helping those around him, and taking the help that is needed from them to him. I think he could be a great mentor, a teacher. I think it's very, very important to know that he has a lot to contribute.

HARRIS: Would you still visit him?

FRITZ: Absolutely.

HARRIS: That's all I have. Thank you, Coni.