Witness: Jacqueline Peterson

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Called by: Defense

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Examinations: Direct – Mark Geragos

Day 1 of 1 for this witness

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Direct Examination by Mark Geragos

GERAGOS: Good morning, Jacqueline.

PETERSON: Good morning.

GERAGOS: As Pat did with Lee, I'm going to ask you a little bit about your background before we get to Scott,

PETERSON: Okay.

GERAGOS: show that the jury understands. They've heard some of it in here throughout this trial, correct?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And it's been difficult I suppose for you to sit here during this trial, is that correct?

PETERSON: Yes. Extremely.

GERAGOS: Probably the most difficult day was the day that Sharon was up here during this penalty phase, and I had warned you about that, but you said you still wanted to be here. Why?

PETERSON: It would have been disrespectful not to be for, we all lost Laci and I have empathy for her. And I know how much we all loved her.

GERAGOS: You got a condition, and I don't want to dwell on it, but obviously you wear an oxygen, something to assist you in breathing?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Why is that?

PETERSON: Because my lungs don't function that well. I have 20% lung capacity from too many pneumonias.

GERAGOS: My understanding in talking with you and knowing you for the last couple of years, is that a product of having had pneumonia at an early age?

PETERSON: Yes, my lungs are scarred and don't function.

GERAGOS: You've been on a waiting list for a lung transplant for a number of years?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: The problem is that you need both lungs I guess because of your, you've got a rare blood type?

PETERSON: Two lungs, small lungs, and that's usually the first thing to go when people die. They're hard to come by.

GERAGOS: Has this condition gotten worse in the last two years?

PETERSON: Yes. I'm supposed to avoid stress.

GERAGOS: We haven't done a very good job of that, have we?

PETERSON: No.

GERAGOS: We heard where your father I guess was murdered, you never really knew him, did you?

PETERSON: No, I didn't.

GERAGOS: You understand after the fact that apparently it was I guess at the time they didn't know why or who, but he was found dead outside of his business?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: When that happened it took a number of years before they were able to catch the person that was eventually convicted, is that right?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. And that person was sentenced to prison, is that right?

PETERSON: Yes. I've only read it in the paper, in old papers. My mother couldn't speak of it and never spoke of our father. I thought I really didn't have one at times.

GERAGOS: You've told me that you, since you have no real memories of your father you've looked or tried to find pictures of him,

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Either through yearbooks or other things to try to at least explore that portion of your life?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And you've done that, is that correct?

PETERSON: Yes, in my early adulthood I was able to find an album from where we thought he went to school and those are the pictures I have.

GERAGOS: As a result of his murder one of your brothers I think described briefly the fact that your mother had a debilitating disease, is that right?

PETERSON: She developed scleroderma and we were told it was because she didn't release the feelings she had when my father died because she kept it all inside. She had four young children to raise and could not, could not breakdown, and so her organs broke down. They calcified basically until she died a very horrible death over the years of being bedridden.

GERAGOS: She, you didn't live with her after your father died, is that correct?

PETERSON: No, she couldn't take care of us.

GERAGOS: Part of the reason for that was because I guess your other brother who hasn't been here describes this disease as kind of turning to stone, is that right?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: That the skin falls off or calcifies, the organs calcify,

PETERSON: Hm-hmm.

GERAGOS: basically?

PETERSON: Everything you eat becomes calcium. And I don't know, people refer to it as a lost wife in the bible in the body so I think it's a very old disease and there's not a lot known about it, but it's very debilitating and a long process.

GERAGOS: As a result of her disease and your father's murder, you were placed in a facility that was called Nazareth House?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And were you, were you taken there with your brothers?

PETERSON: Yes, it was the old mission school for Indians and it was in the early, well, the late 40s when there were less Indians there and there was just a few and orphans and we were probably the first children to come in that had, actually had one parent. And over many years it became more divorced parents and that kind of, but when I was there it was very sheltered.

GERAGOS: Yet, you and I have talked about it, you have some memories of that, that place in growing up there and those are your earliest memories, is that correct?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Tell me about the, I guess they were called the poor sisters of Nazareth?

PETERSON: Nazareth.

GERAGOS: And they were the ones, the nuns who would run this orphanage?

PETERSON: Yes, they were Irish and English nuns and most of them I learned later were just poor young girls. They had too many children in Ireland and the parents would put them in the convent. So they were just kids that took care of all the younger children that could take care of children and a few teachers.

GERAGOS: How did they, how did they solicit?

PETERSON: They begged from door-to-door for their food for us. And like big companies, would give them their outdated cereals and their outdated breads. And we had chickens and we collected eggs and we got eggs maybe once a week for a treat.

GERAGOS: Every time I've talked to you about this, well, you would tell me that you would be quarantined periodically for TB and things of that nature, you'd tell me about the discipline of cleaning toilets and kneeling on the floor?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And ear flicks in mass?

PETERSON: Hm-hmm.

GERAGOS: And every time I've tried to characterize that as being a rather tough existence, you've always told me our needs were met. What do you mean by that?

PETERSON: What I mean is I felt fortunate I had a roof over my head and three meals a day and was educated. There was no hugging or anything like that, but my mother, somehow she got that through to us. I don't know how. But we knew that God loved us and that just took over everything.

GERAGOS: Is there a nun there that you have a particularly fond memory of?

PETERSON: Yes, Sister Vincent who I met 25 years later when my son visited the school, the old folks home. She became the principal. And she had been my fifth and sixth grade teacher and was actually a nurse so she took care of me because I had asthma and I had to have special shots and the doctor would come once in a while and she would administer what he left. And I saw her when I went to see what he was up to and she was all crumpled down. And I hadn't seen her probably in 30 years and she looked at me and said "How's your asthma, dear."

GERAGOS: It's a memory?

PETERSON: Sweet blessed woman.

GERAGOS: And this was in connection with some of the stuff that Scott was doing in connection with Sister Kiley's community service program?

PETERSON: They had grandparents' day at school. We didn't have any grandparents. And he told me he was going. And I said, you don't have any grandparents, do you want me to go with you. And he said, no, I adopted this old lady at the old folks home and I've been visiting her for months and she said she'd come to lunch with me as my grandparent so that's when I wanted to go to the school and see what he was doing because I realized, I knew he was in community service, but I didn't know what he was doing.

GERAGOS: How old were you when you finally left this,

PETERSON: Thirteen. Eighth grade. Well, you went through the eighth grade you had to leave and go to high school somewhere.

GERAGOS: And when you left, did you go, at that point did you go back and live at your mother's house?

PETERSON: Yes, I got a scholarship to the Catholic girl's high school, which was 20 miles across town on a bus, and I got to live with my mother and took care of her because she was bedridden. And my brothers, each as they came out two years out apart, took care of her. And when I came home it was like, you're the girl, now we have somebody to do everything. We were taught that way at school, we cleaned and we learned to sew and we learned to cook and I was able to do that, and happily, because my mother was just a good kind person.

GERAGOS: The, how long did your mom live after you moved back home?

PETERSON: Just until I graduated from high school.

GERAGOS: A couple years?

PETERSON: Her last outing was to my high school graduation, which was very painful for her. But, no, she died the January following my graduation.

GERAGOS: And I take it that at times your friends would come over to the house?

PETERSON: My friends loved her and they would come and sit on her bed because she was the mom that was at home and had time for all the kids, boy and girls.

GERAGOS: One of those friends was Joanne Farmer?

PETERSON: Joanne Farmer, yes, her mother worked so she would come home with me.

GERAGOS: But the high school you went to was the rosary high school for girls?

PETERSON: Yes, Our Lady of the Rosary.

GERAGOS: After your mom died it's my understanding just from the testimony and the witnesses here that your family kind of spread out at a certain point?

PETERSON: Yes, my brothers, it was the draft era and my brother, John, had already moved out to make room for the rest of us to live in the house and when my mother was still there. And my younger brother got drafted and I got an apartment on my own with a girlfriend.

GERAGOS: And,

PETERSON: And so they were all gone.

GERAGOS: You went to work on your own, you were obviously not married?

PETERSON: I went to work with the air lines, PSA, in their hanger. The nuns trained me with office skills because they told me I couldn't go to college because I'd have to take care of my mother and so that just made me want to go to college so I went to school at nights and I worked days. But because of them, I had good skills and got a good job to support myself.

GERAGOS: Well, you heard about the fact that you had become pregnant with your first son Don?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: You were 19. You had given him up for adoption, is that right?

PETERSON: Yes, I did.

GERAGOS: Why?

PETERSON: Because I couldn't care for him. I, I was just existing and I was naive and young and I got with someone that told you they loved you and wanted to marry you, that's what they meant. And it just wasn't so. And I think I got involved because I wanted a father and a family. I look at that now, but at the time I was just clueless. I was brought up very naive and not smart.

GERAGOS: After that you left PSA, is that correct, because of Don?

PETERSON: Yes, my, in those days my boss came and stood by my desk and said you have to leave. And I said why. She said because you're pregnant. And I, I thought nobody knew. So I was about six months pregnant. It was just what you didn't, if you weren't married, it wasn't acceptable. And you couldn't draw unemployment if you were pregnant in those days. So it was a very hard time, but it was my own makings and I got through it. And my son was adopted by a very nice family. And my doctor had people waiting wanting a child and he talked to me and counseled me and told me that was the best thing to do.

GERAGOS: When you left then you went to work as kind of a temp person at an office?

PETERSON: Yes, I went to work for Kelly Girls and I took jobs when people were off work or injured for a while and I moved around in different companies, learned a lot of different things. And I was always employable.

GERAGOS: You later had a second child who the jury's heard about, Ann Bird?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. And what happened in that situation?

PETERSON: You mean why do I have her or,

GERAGOS: Yeah.

PETERSON: the adoption?

GERAGOS: Just tell me about the whole,

PETERSON: Well, it was my brother's best friend and I met up with him and I suppose now he was like someone I trusted and we went together for a long time and we were in love and he graduated from college with his teaching credential and couldn't find a job in San Diego so he moved to Los Angeles and came down every weekend and then, I know this sounds like a broken record, but he, then it was every other weekend and then he came down to tell me that he had fallen in love with another teacher he had just met and I was going to tell him that I was pregnant and I didn't because I didn't want to, I knew he would have married me and I didn't want to marry someone that was in love with someone else.

GERAGOS: So the, and also you had that pregnancy and you gave,

PETERSON: Yes, my doctor.

GERAGOS: same doctor I guess arranged for her to be adopted?

PETERSON: Yes, it was a private adoption.

GERAGOS: You've reunited with both of them since, is that correct?

PETERSON: Yes, her parents, unbeknown to me she lived very near me and her parents are, her mother can be my sister eight years older and her father's very much like my husband. It's just an amazing match. She's very sweet and she has hands like me and likes all the same things I like. It's just incredible. But we all get along, her parents and she and I get together.

GERAGOS: And along came John who the jury's heard from and he was born in 1966, is that right?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And by that time you were more self sufficient?

PETERSON: Yes. Well, not that. I think I wanted a family and I was trying to make a family and I finally had my, I was a single mom and,

GERAGOS: You raised,

PETERSON: I enjoyed my life.

GERAGOS: Did you raise John, at least for the couple of years as a single mom?

PETERSON: Yes, until he was four and I met my husband.

GERAGOS: Okay. When you, and we heard the story that you enrolled or come back to San Diego and a bit of a trip around the country and then come back with John and met Lee at a community college?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And did that give you an instant family, so to speak?

PETERSON: Yes, it gave me the family I always wanted. We used to call ourselves the Brady Bunch because there were so many of us.

GERAGOS: Tell me how long after you married Lee did you have Scott?

PETERSON: A year.

GERAGOS: And he also had pneumonia just like you when he was born I guess?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Early times?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: The, will you tell me a little bit about Scott as growing up. I'll show you,

PETERSON: Well, if you ask me about Scott I would always say he was a joy from the moment he was born.

GERAGOS: I've got a picture that's marked as D9Q-1. How old is he there?

PETERSON: Under two.

GERAGOS: The, at that point am I understanding that Lee had already started with the crating company?

PETERSON: Yes, we were doing that out of our home and the kids and I would pick up goods in the day and my husband would come home and crate the stuff at night until the neighbor told us we couldn't be working out of our garage, that we'd have to go rent a place.

GERAGOS: D9Q-2, is that also about the same age?

PETERSON: His love of gardening. He had a vegetable garden.

GERAGOS: D9Q-3 is also him?

PETERSON: The Hook, yes, it was a tow truck toy he loved.

GERAGOS: Now, is it fair to say that he grew up in that crating shop?

PETERSON: Yes, he, he slept in, we put a day bed in the room behind my office. And he went with my husband on jobs and he stayed with me when he couldn't. And he took his naps and played. He was like the official greeter. He had a smile for everybody that came in. People enjoyed him.

GERAGOS: The, the attempt to do what the older boys were doing, things like that?

PETERSON: Yes. Always.

GERAGOS: The D9Q-5, that's also a picture of him, where is that?

PETERSON: Watering his flowers in front of the house.

GERAGOS: As he got older he became interested in helping others, is that correct?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: D9Q-6 that's Scott as what, crossing guard, safety guard?

PETERSON: He was a crossing guard and that was, you had to be recommended by the teacher to do that. It was a special thing for him. So I went to, when I took that picture, that's the one and only picture I saw him do that. There would be a car three blocks away and he wouldn't let anybody cross, he was so serious and so business like. And all the kids were waiting and this mother just snatched her kid and said, oh, he always takes too long, and she started to cross the street and he's still holding up his nose crossing. Finally all the kids followed and I felt really bad for him, but he got the hang of it after a while. He was just overly cautious.

GERAGOS: We heard that he was in the cub scouts. He was also played little league, that's D9Q-7, is that right?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: It's a picture of him and his little league thing?

PETERSON: Yes, he got knocked out in between the eyes with the ball and that was kind of the end of that.

GERAGOS: What kind of a student was he in those years?

PETERSON: He was a good student. All through his school years the teachers would tell me I wish I had a whole room of kids like Scott. From kindergarten to college I've had teachers say that to me.

GERAGOS: D9Q-9, a picture of Scott also?

JUDGE: What happened to 8?

GERAGOS: I'll come back.

PETERSON: We rescued a black lab. We found him running. And we put up a sign at the grocery store and then this family called us like two weeks later and said that it was their dog, but Scott was so attached to it that they told him that he could have the dog and they knew it had a good home so he taught him to swim and he played with him. He took full responsibility for walking him and feeding him, carrying for him.

GERAGOS: The family, when you had mentioned before it was like the Brady Bunch. I've got this picture, D9Q-10, is that your version of it?

PETERSON: Yes. With dogs. We lived in a cul-de-sac and actually it annoyed people because there were several people that had no children so we eventually moved to a place that had some room on it so the kids could run.

GERAGOS: You lived primarily in those years with his brother, John, correct?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And they have had a good relationship?

PETERSON: Yes. But the kids were there every weekend and in between the week as well.

GERAGOS: The families would get together, I've got D9Q-8?

PETERSON: Grandpa's birthday.

GERAGOS: And that's Lee's father?

PETERSON: Yes, he came to live with us when his wife died.

GERAGOS: What year was that?

PETERSON: I think '74. He became like a father to me because I had never had one and he was a great grand, grand parent to Scott. He would play with him for hours and entertain him.

GERAGOS: He went to the Santa Fe School where Roger Roe was the principal,

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: who testified here. I've got D9Q-11, is that the school?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: My understanding, I just found out yesterday, it's no longer called the Santa Fe School, is it?

PETERSON: It's Rancho Santa Fe Elementary School.

GERAGOS: Someone told me it's now the Roger Roe School.

PETERSON: Oh, well, he's entitled. He's just done wonders for the community and he knew every parent. I met him, after we moved in, he came up my walk one day to introduce himself as the principal of the school and brought some paperwork to me so I would know what was going on. And I was so impressed. He did that with everybody.

GERAGOS: As Scott was growing up, the jury's heard a lot about his relationship with Lee. He also would, you had him around as well, you had a dress shop, is that correct?

PETERSON: Yes, for the first two years of his life I kept him in a crib in the dress shop. And I didn't want anyone else to get to take care of him and I always worked and never got to take care of my children. So we bought a little shop and my husband and I would go on weekends up to the mart to buy clothes and I did alterations. And he was fine until he got out one day and bit a woman on the toe, crawling, then I knew he could crawl. And, I mean, I knew he might get out the door and I had to have the door open so finally I had someone take care of him.

GERAGOS: When he went to this, back then it was called the Rancho Santa Fe School. That's where he became best friends with Britton Scheibe who we heard from?

PETERSON: Yes. Yes, Britton was a nice young woman.

GERAGOS: And he excelled, Scott excelled as well, winning the Distinguished Student Award in eighth grade?

PETERSON: Yes, he had good grades. He had perfect attendance, I found out later he received an award from the rotary. I only found that out two years ago. He was very modest about his accomplishments and never bragged or told us things that went on in school that we weren't there for. They were things he thought he just, he just did them.

GERAGOS: Was one of those things that he just did was that the relationship with, it's been referred to as Grandpa Peterson?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Will you tell me a little bit about that.

PETERSON: Well, grandpa missed his wife and we didn't want him to be alone, so we moved him in with us. And grandpa would play with his toys with him, play cards with him. And then grandpa, as he got older, we had him come to work with us, when Scott was working for us. And he kind of, when people came to our business they all thought he owned the business because he was the oldest. So he would talk to them. And one day when he was 74 we noticed he would come in and then fall asleep at 10:00 o'clock and so we decided, at this time he had moved out and so we decided he had to come and live with us because we were worried about him. And so we spent a month fixing up a little house for him. He moved in and he was worried about his coffee in the morning. I told him I would bring him coffee and he, he took us to dinner at his favorite restaurant, had his favorite meal. We were all there because all the kids came to help move him. Told us how lucky he was to have all of us and how blessed, and he died in his sleep that night in his bed. Somehow I knew it. I waited and waited for him to open the drapes because I could look across the little house. And finally I went out there with the coffee with the pretense and he had died in his sleep. But he had had a wonderful good-bye. We were lucky.

GERAGOS: How did that affect Scott?

PETERSON: Oh, it was very sad for him. He lost his buddy. His good friend. But we were lucky to have him. Scott was lucky to have him.

GERAGOS: As Scott grew up, D9Q-12, the family was fairly close or real close, how would you characterize it?

PETERSON: Very close. There was never any separation. I wasn't referred to as their stepmother or they weren't stepchildren, they were just children. And we just all got along. This year when Susan had Mother's Day, her, her mother and her husband come and we all get along. I'm so grateful that she did her part in raising the children as well. They were never any trouble. And it would have been very hard on her had they been any trouble.

GERAGOS: I've got D9Q-13 up there, do you know where that picture's taken?

PETERSON: It was Easter. I can tell. I think that's in the arboretum at high school in Rancho Santa Fe.

GERAGOS: D9Q-14?

PETERSON: Susie's wedding. No, Janey's wedding in Iowa.

GERAGOS: How about D9Q-15, do you know what that's a picture of?

PETERSON: That's Scott with his nieces and nephews at dinner. We must be at a restaurant and the kids would sit together.

GERAGOS: D9Q-16, do you know what this is a picture of?

PETERSON: John's wedding when Scott was best man and Scott and Laci came down for it.

GERAGOS: D9Q-17, is that him giving a toast?

PETERSON: Yes, he gave a beautiful toast about his brother and their marriage.

GERAGOS: D9Q-18, do you know,

PETERSON: I think that's his 18th birthday. We went to Arizona to see him and celebrate his 18th birthday.

GERAGOS: D9Q-19?

PETERSON: Susie's wedding. Scott and Mark.

GERAGOS: D9Q-20?

PETERSON: That's Ann, my daughter, and Scott and I, when we first met and they thought they were looking in mirrors in our home.

GERAGOS: D9Q-21?

PETERSON: That's Ann's wedding. Her parents invited our entire family and took pictures of all of us with her so we can have a wedding picture.

GERAGOS: The,

PETERSON: Don is there also with his daughter.

GERAGOS: You've been extremely close to Scott throughout his life?

PETERSON: Correct. Yes.

GERAGOS: You watched him talk about the relationship you had with his grandfather. Another kind of pivotal person in his life was, you told me at least, it was Sister Joan Kiley?

PETERSON: Yes, Joan Kiley. I'm grateful for her getting him into service and he had, I remember when he was seven years old and a little girl in front of us didn't have enough money to pay for her purchases. And he said, mom, she needs some money. And he actually felt sorry that she couldn't afford what she needed and the man had to put some things back and she made some choices. That was when he realized I was aware that he, we always told him that he was lucky and that he would have to earn his own money, but I think he realized then that people didn't have everything and needed help and he wanted to help her. And I was impressed by the fact that he wanted to help her.

GERAGOS: We've heard some testimony from people about him wanting to work or being industrious, is that always something that you and Lee tried to instill in him?

PETERSON: Yes, my husband is like that. My husband can do ten things in a day and I always tried to catch up. And Scott is like that. He's, he has a busy job, but if somebody needs something he'll stop and help them and take care of his work later. He's just always been a nurturing, kind, loving person all through his life. He, in high school he tutored the homeless in the evenings and came home and told me, mom, those kids don't even have shoes that fit them. Their backs are walked on and things he got me and my friends and his getting shoes. We gave the money to buy shoes for these kids. He just noticed these things, noticed their needs and wanted to help them. And, I, because of my disease, I can't be exposed to colds or the flu. It could be fatal. I can't go there and do hands-on and I can only financially help. And it gave me a way to, to help people that I wanted to help. And made my husband and I, we're involved at St. Vincent de Paul in feeding the homeless and it's all because of Scott really putting us into that. He's an optional young man even if he's my son. I know he's not perfect, he was a normal kid, but he is genuinely a loving, caring, nurturing, kind, gentle person.

GERAGOS: The, at some point he announced to you at age 19 that he was going to support himself, is that correct?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And did he end up doing that?

PETERSON: Yes. He said I'm 20 years old. I've been living off you long enough. I want to support myself and be on my own. And, actually, we were hurt. We wondered what we'd done wrong because we loved having him around. It was fun having him around.

GERAGOS: Is that about the same time that you moved to Morro Bay?

PETERSON: Yes, it was when we moved to Morro Bay and he was working. And he was, did well at the restaurant. He got good tips. And he met Laci. And Laci was struggling on her own. Her grandparents helped pay her tuition. But I think that was part of it. He saw that she worked hard and he wanted to work hard and the two of them just, they lived, not live with us, but through college, it was like we got to go to college with them. They came to do their laundry and we cooked together. Laci and I liked Martha Stewart so I would always have the recipes and she showed up on Mother's Day and planted me an herb garden one year and,

GERAGOS: Would that have been the first year that you met Laci?

PETERSON: Yes. Yes.

GERAGOS: Did the two of you hit it off right away?

PETERSON: Yes, I was still the mom, you know, Scott's mom and she was a little careful around me and I had to learn that anything I said she was very sensitive to it, like mother-in-laws can. No matter what you say it can be different. But we liked all the same things and we were interested and we were both interested in Scott. She adored Scott.

GERAGOS: Did your relationship with Laci grow as her relationship with Scott grew?

PETERSON: Yes, she grew into a beautiful young woman and the two of them were inseparable. We used to tease them about being joined at the hip because they wouldn't, if he left to run down to do something, she went with him. They were just a perfect match.

GERAGOS: The, did they live close to where you and Lee lived up in Morro Bay?

PETERSON: Yes, about ten minutes away. And we spent many times at their house with dinner and many times at our house. She'd call me to go to movies with us. We went to symphonies together. And they kept us up on that through the college. And my husband would go over to the campus just to have coffee with them. Or we go to the arboretum where she was manager and visit her at work and she'd show us the plants and tell me what I needed to do. And she became like a daughter to us for eight years. She was,

GERAGOS: At a certain point did she start calling you mom?

PETERSON: Yes, she did. She's the only one of my daughter-in-laws that calls me mom because she was young when I met her. And the other kids call me Jackie and dad so the other ones picked it up, but because Scott called me mom and she wrote me one day she was comfortable with that and she was happy, she decided to do that.

GERAGOS: As the years went by and you would spend more and more time I guess getting to know both Scott and Laci's relationship,

PETERSON: Yes. I loved Laci as much as Sharon loved Scott and we both were supportive of them and it was just an equal thing. I think having her eight years is like having, if you had a child eight years, you couldn't love that child any less if you had them 20 years. They're in your home and their part of you, they become part of your family.

GERAGOS: You were looking forward obviously to the baby?

PETERSON: Yes, we all were. They tried three years to get pregnant. And originally Laci made jobs she didn't want any children because she thought she couldn't have any. And we all understood it. And one Thanksgiving my grand kids were wrestling, she said, that's a good reason for birth control right over there. But nobody took it that way because we knew she

would not be unkind. And over the years she had some medical treatments and was able to, they talked about adoption. They wanted a baby. And when she got pregnant we were all elated. Thrilled.

GERAGOS: You told me yesterday what this whole ordeal has been like for you. Can you describe for the jury what it's been like.

PETERSON: The whole process of going through?

GERAGOS: You said you feel hollow at this point.

PETERSON: I do. My husband and I talk. We feel like we're just shells in front of you in coming here everyday like there's nothing left inside us. We've mourned for Laci and Conner. We've seen Scott mourn for them. We've lost him and them. And I really feel if, if you were to take Scott away from us it would, they were like a family, Laci and Conner and Scott. And it would be a whole family wiped off the whole face of the earth. It would be like Laci never existed because she was a woman with him, she grew with him from 18 to 28. And it was a family member of ours and we would lose a whole family, both Sharon and I would lose a whole family. You know, it would be like they never existed. That it would be so unreasonable. Such a waste. It's, it's irreversible and he can do a lot of good things with his life. No matter what it is, he'll do it. And I, I beg you to consider that how he helps people and how he always has. In this trial you've heard one month of how he reacted to the loss of his wife and baby being ripped from him. The bizarre things he did because he didn't know what to do at 30 years old when all his work was taken away. He was stalked by the media and everybody twisted and turned and harassed by the police and painted as a devil in the public. He's not that. He's never been that. He's always been nurturing and kind and loving.

JUDGE: Let's get back to questions and answers, Mr. Geragos.

GERAGOS: I have no further questions.

JUDGE: Any questions, Ms. Fladager?

FLADAGER: No questions, Your Honor.

JUDGE: Okay. Mrs. Peterson, thank you.