Witness: Leeta Latham

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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: We just heard from Robert Latham, is that your father?

LATHAM: Yeah.

HARRIS: You grew up in San Diego or where?

LATHAM: I grew up primarily in Rancho Cucamonga

HARRIS: And where is that in relation to San Diego?

LATHAM: It's northeast of it. So I spent most of the time with my mom and then I spent every other weekend with my dad and he lived in Idlewild for most of my childhood which is east of where I grew up.

HARRIS: And that's about what, an hour-and-a-half or so from San Diego, hour-and-a-half, two hours from San Diego?

LATHAM: Yeah, around there.

HARRIS: Where do you live now?

LATHAM: I live in Costa Mesa.

HARRIS: And what do you do for a living?

LATHAM: I am an environmental educator so I teach science for grade school children in schools or out-in-the-field programs.

HARRIS: You have a brother and a sister, excuse me, two brothers and sisters; is that right?

LATHAM: Two brothers and a sister. Actually, I have two brothers and two sisters, one that's not a Latham.

HARRIS: Okay. Got it. Where do you fall in the family lineup?

LATHAM: I'm the oldest.

HARRIS: Where do you fall in terms of relationship to Scott age wise?

LATHAM: I'm about two years younger than Scott.

HARRIS: As you were growing up did you have the opportunity to see Scott?

LATHAM: Yeah, we've always grown up together, shared memories. In fact, even shared a crib. Scott's crib became mine when I was born. And then from then on we played together as kids

when we would get together. Either they would come up Idlewild or we would go down to San Diego and spend weekends there when we were with my dad playing around the house.

HARRIS: What kind of things would you do as kids?

LATHAM: We'd play games together. We'd play out in the backyard was the best place because they kind of lived in a rural area that backed up to a hillside with lots of rocks and so they always had elaborate forts out there and we'd play out in the forts. We'd play inside the house. We, Scott and John developed even a magic game that we would play when, well, they could only fool us a couple times with it. But I remember one time when we got there they would hide in the closet and pull the closet closed and then we would sit outside and John would say the magic words. And then Scott, unbeknown to us, would climb through the ceiling and out and then run out of the house and then John would open the door and Scott would be gone. And so we'd play, you know, kid games like that.

HARRIS: Teach you how to try and catch crayfish?

LATHAM: Yeah. There was a little area with a stream nearby and Scott would take us down and teach us how to pick up crayfish up out of the stream without getting pinched. Our Uncle Patrick had told us that they would pinch our toes off so Scott taught us how to use tennis rackets to pick them up and look at them.

HARRIS: Growing up with Scott you saw him as a fun person?

LATHAM: Yeah, we always had a good time together.

HARRIS: I see the word quiet has been used a lot, was he always quiet to you?

LATHAM: He was always quiet when you first get there and once you kind of break that down, once you would start playing together, then he was a lot of fun and he's that way now, he's very quiet, but still a lot of fun.

HARRIS: You, at some point your relationship with Scott sort of took a hiatus, right, you didn't see him for how long?

LATHAM: Right. When my dad moved overseas then we lived with my mom only and so we didn't get together with the Petersons at all or even the other Latham's. So it wasn't until I was coming back from then being overseas and I was a young adult that I saw Scott.

HARRIS: Once you reconnected later did anything change?

LATHAM: Not a lot had changed in our relationship. We had changed obviously as people because we weren't kids anymore, we were adults. And Scott was still the quiet kid, but now he was an adult and so he, I remember the first time I saw him, I hadn't seen him in, like, six years and here he is kind of quiet and didn't know if he was, you know, quiet still because he was a shy kid or if he's unapproachable, but that's the same old Scott. Once you get up there and Scott hanging out with him and having conversations with him, then he is a real great guy.

HARRIS: Where would you see him?

LATHAM: We saw him at family gatherings. The first time I saw him was at Jackie and Lee's 25th wedding anniversary. And then from then on out everybody seemed to be in the same place at the same time. Ann and Rachel were living with, living down in San Luis Obispo. Our family was all down in basically in California now in the states and so we always got together down in La Jolla for family gatherings at least once a year when Uncle John was down.

HARRIS: Did you also have a chance to get to know Laci a little bit?

LATHAM: Yeah, I remember the first time I met her was at Aunt Jackie's and Uncle Lee's 25th wedding anniversary, but I didn't actually get a chance to talk to her until one of the family gatherings after that. And she's, I remember the first impression I have of her was that she was

the perfect match for Scott.

HARRIS: Why?

LATHAM: Because Scott's very quiet and seems a bit standoffish, kind of reserved, and it takes, it took somebody like Laci to bring him out to get him, kind of crack that shell on him.

HARRIS: You told me about a time when Laci and Scott were down in San Diego for a family reunion and didn't show up on Sunday?

LATHAM: Yeah, they didn't show up on Sunday. That was the time that we usually got together for breakfast as a family and I, I hadn't seen Scott in a while and so we were wondering where Scott was and Aunt Jackie had told me that he had actually gone out early and would be meeting us later because he was taking I guess it was an older friend of his, an older woman, and Laci was going with them, to take her to mass in the morning and that he would be joining us later.

HARRIS: Is that the kind of things you heard or saw that Scott and Laci would do?

LATHAM: Absolutely. Scott's always been very generous. Even as we were kids he was always, you know, they always had the cool toys and, you know, cool games and things like that that we always were interested in playing with and Scott was always generous with his toys, but also generous with his time as we were adults.

HARRIS: As you sit here today what are the things that you feel like Scott has made is a positive impact on your life?

LATHAM: Well, I think about the type of person that Scott is. As far as we can all, I think all of us can say in our family that we think Scott is a great guy and a real good person, but one of the qualities that's great is his quietness and his, he doesn't want to be the center of attention, but he does a lot of good things on the side that you have to really dig around to find out if he's doing it. Like he never told us the night that we were together that he was going to leave early in the morning to take everybody to mass that, you know, couldn't drive themselves. And he wouldn't have mentioned it at any other time, but Aunt Jackie did. So he's very giving, but in a way that he doesn't want to be recognized for it necessarily. And he's a very loving individual. Very fun. Very much the man that I hope my son becomes.

HARRIS: The last question I'll ask you is you told me that although he was quiet when he would smile, what effect did that have on you?

LATHAM: He kind of lights up the room. He's got a great smile. I haven't seen it in a while, but he's got a twinkle in his eye and everybody smiles along with him. His whole face smiles with him, his eyes especially.

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