Witness: Hugh Gerhardt

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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. I think the judge called you coach. Is that your occupation?

GERHARDT: Yes.

GERAGOS: Where are you coaching now?

GERHARDT: I'm at Palomar Community College down in San Diego.

GERAGOS: What do you coach now?

GERHARDT: I coach everything again. Once again, I'm now doing cross country for Palomar. I teach nutrition, health, advanced first aid, and any kind of PE class that comes up.

GERAGOS: Okay. Before that, your present job, where were you?

GERHARDT: I was at Cuesta College for about seven years in San Luis Obispo. And that's where I coached, well, quote, unquote, coached golf for Cuesta.

GERAGOS: You say, quote, unquote. Why is that?

GERHARDT: Because I'm really a volleyball coach, and that was my specialty. And in the fall is when that season would go. And then we lost our golf coach. And the Athletic Director came walking by and said, "What do you know about golf?" I said, "Nothing. You know. I can shoot a hundred like anybody else." He said, "Well really need someone. Will you do it? Just keep them under control, et cetera." And I said, you know, "If you want me to do it I'll do it." It's in the spring. And it was an adventure, that's for sure. And coaching golf is a certainly a, you know, every season I would ask anybody, "All right, who's got a dad here wants to take my position? Come on. I'm not a coach. I'm just a glorified chauffeur." Wouldn't get any takers. Long days. Six hours. You have to drive a lot.

GERAGOS: How long were you, were you coaching at Cuesta before, how long, you coached seven years total?

GERHARDT: Seven years total. About four years of golf, and the other was volleyball.

GERAGOS: Okay. How long had you been there before you ran into Scott Peterson?

GERHARDT: I went to school at Cal Poli. Been coaching there for four years. And then it was my third year of coaching, and all of a sudden Scott shows up, and he wants to play, wants to try out. And I saw him shoot a round of golf. He was very good. And I said, now, wait a minute. This is an, I mean is this a ringer? Where did you play at? Told me down in high school. He went to Arizona, didn't work out. And so you have to fill out eligibility forms. I said, look, this has got to

be legit. We don't want any problems because you are a pretty good player. So he had to fill out the green form. And I said, I'm going to check with Arizona, and then where have you been since then. And so he had to write all that down after everything checked out.

GERAGOS: Okay. Now, when you, I assume that you came to know him, you coached him for how long?

GERHARDT: Two years.

GERAGOS: Okay.

GERHARDT: Well, quote, unquote, coached him, yeah.

GERAGOS: And you came to know him as a friend or a,

GERHARDT: Yeah, you know, it was more of that type of relationship. With my volleyball teams I grind them, and it would be pretty tough practices. With golf, pretty much it was glorified, I was driving around keeping them in line, get the collared shirts. Any kind of bad language or anything, I don't need you. See you later. Scott was, you know, he knew that I wasn't, my big tip to these guys was go see your pro, go see your dad. They are going to help you a lot more with golf than I am. I'll get you there on time. Right away, though, you develop a rapport with golfers. I have coached baseball. I have coached volleyball. I have coached everything. You get to know the athletes. But golf, you really get to know the athletes.

GERAGOS: Why is that?

GERHARDT: Because you are walking the holes with them. You are not talking about the next shot the whole time. You are coming up, you are talking about life events. You are talking about everything as you play a round. I think that's why it's so popular in business. You know what kind of people you are working with. I have played about ten rounds of golf with Scott. And, you know, absolutely honest. Never saw him, he didn't cheat on a score card. He always kept his temper. His big move when he made a bad move would be just do grit his teeth, and then, bingo, forget it and move on. And that's what a good golfer needs to do.

GERAGOS: Did you, how did he get along with the others, the other players in the team?

GERHARDT: Everybody liked Scott. He was one of those guys that would make you feel good, and but it wouldn't be fake. He would invite, he would have a party, a team party. Coach went to the team party. I don't hang out with you guys. But he would take some of our nerdy guys, and he would make sure they would come. He would make them a part of it. Every time I hear these descriptions of Scott being arrogant, I say, no, it's incorrect he was confident. That was good. And that's what you wanted. But arrogant, no. Confident, yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. You say you had, over the two years, that you did develop respect for him?

GERHARDT: Yes. Because he really could have belittled me, because he knew what I was doing. And he didn't. He was great. He would come up to me time and time the again. Okay, coach, this is how we're going to tee up the ball now. This is what we are gonna do. It is literally helping me get through it, and trying to, you know, make me look more appropriate to what I was doing out there. Although I soon found it that many of the golf coaches were in the same boat.

GERAGOS: You said that you know you had respect for him, as well as you think he showed you respect?

GERHARDT: Yes. Yes, it was mutual.

GERAGOS: And would you tell me, do you think, I guess there were a couple of events you also told me stick out in your mind about Scott. One was what you had told me this morning. What is the most memorable date or evening of your life? Would you tell the jury what that was?

GERHARDT: Pardon me, what was that again?

GERAGOS: You told me about one of these most memorable evening or dinners you ever had?

GERHARDT: I was dating a girl. He said I work at this restaurant, and I went , he goes I'd like to, you would like to come in? And I went, sure. These are mostly 18, 19-year-olds. I'm in my thirties. Thirties. Most of them are kind of a lot of talk and stuff. But Scott was a lot more sophisticated and genuine. And he said, you come into that restaurant. And I'm going, okay, I'll bring her in. And I will never, it was the one of, the Pacific Restaurant. It was one of the nicest dinners. He made sure everything was right. Took care of everything. And I'll never forget this meal to this day. I mean I have been coaching for twenty years. I have never had an athlete, every now and then they will offer something. But, you know, just you are, it's McDonalds or something. This was really a special evening for that date that I had. It was even to the point of, you know, he had some flowers there. It was just terrific.

GERAGOS: You have also told me at one point, I guess you left Cuesta, you got into law enforcement at some point, reserve officer for a couple of years?

GERHARDT: Yeah. But I'd almost like to go back. My last season was cut short. I lost my brother in a snowmobile mishap, and we were all up near Bear River Resort looking for my brother. And some of the coaches came up, and I don't know, the search, we didn't find those guys until six months later. And Scott genuinely called up and said, you want me to come up? I'll come up right now. I no, no, just play golf. I got some of the coaches up there. I really appreciate that, but don't. You know. Just play golf. That's what I want you to do. Keep everybody in line. And then when I came back at the end of the season, usually get some sort of, you know, dinky little trophy, or they come up with some gag gift. I know Scott went out of his way to get me just a nice golf bag. My golf bag was pretty ridiculous. He got a nice golf bag, Cuesta Cougars, and stuff. It was beyond the call of duty that I have seen in my twenty years of coaching.

GERAGOS: That's something that really sticks with you until today?

GERHARDT: Oh, absolutely, yeah.

GERAGOS: You told me that after that, when you left coaching, you went, I guess you went do Utah State. At some point you decided to try law enforcement for a while?

GERHARDT: Oh, yeah, yeah. I was part time at Cuesta. Couldn't get on full time. Then I ended up going to the police academy at Hancock Community College. And I did three years of Level 1 Reserve in Arroyo Grande, a little town just below San Luis Obispo. That was a great experience.

GERAGOS: At some point after that, did you tell me that when you were looking for work, you got out of that, and Scott had called you?

GERHARDT: I'm still, I'm painting houses. I'm trying to get on to a police force. I'm doing anything I can. Scott calls me up, and he said, look, I have this crating, I want you to come down the here. I really appreciate it. Thank you. But I'm going to go my own route. And that was uncommon. I have never had an athlete do that. There was sincerity, that he said, look, I'll help you find something if you can't find anything.

GERAGOS: You know that the reason that we are here is that Scott has been convicted of the crime of murder, and now this jury has got to decide, their work now is to decide what's the appropriate punishment, whether to put him to death, or whether to let him live for the rest of his life in a prison cell.

GERHARDT: Right.

GERAGOS: Do you have an opinion as to,

GERHARDT: For whatever it's worth, you know, I believe in the death penalty. And there are some hombres out there that you just don't ever want them to see the light of day. And I don't think that fits Scott. I just don't think that's it. I think he has things that he can still benefit

society in. And there is also, I mean 23 out of 24 hours a day in a cell, I mean that would even be worst. But I think he can do productive things. And just kind of hoping it is that way.

GERAGOS: Thank you. I have no further questions.