Witness: Janey Peterson

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Direct Examination by Mark Geragos

GERAGOS: Good morning, Janey.

PETERSON: Good morning.

GERAGOS: You married into the Peterson family, is that correct?

PETERSON: I did.

GERAGOS: And you're married to which Peterson?

PETERSON: The cute one, Joe.

GERAGOS: When was that?

PETERSON: 1987.

GERAGOS: And I assume you met Joe or knew Joe or some kind of a courtship period before you got married?

PETERSON: Yes.

JUDGE: Can you keep your voice up because I can hardly hear you. I'm not sure the jury can hear you.

GERAGOS: Approximately how long did that last?

PETERSON: I think I knew Joe about maybe 13, 14 months prior to getting married.

GERAGOS: Okay. Where did you grow up?

PETERSON: I grew up in the Midwest in Iowa.

GERAGOS: In Iowa. And where did you meet Joe?

PETERSON: Came out here to San Diego after I graduated high school and I met Joe in college in a volleyball class.

GERAGOS: Okay. What college was that?

PETERSON: Mesa College. Actually, the same, same college that Jackie and Lee met at.

GERAGOS: When you first met Joe in this volleyball class, at some point after that you guys started dating?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. And at some point I take it you met either Lee or Jackie or the family?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: When was that or how long after you first met Joe?

PETERSON: I met Lee first and I think it was maybe probably a month or so after Joe and I started dating. I met him, Joe took me to the races where we met with his dad and I know there were other siblings there.

GERAGOS: Do you remember if Scott was there the first time you met Lee?

PETERSON: I remember just being kind of nervous about meeting his dad, but he made me feel right at home right away. He just looked at me and smiled and he said what's a nice girl like you doing with a guy like this. Because ever since that, ever since that day he made me feel very welcome.

GERAGOS: I assume at some point you were introduced to the rest of the family and started to integrate with the rest of the family?

PETERSON: Yeah, I think I actually didn't meet Jackie. I spent Christmas Eve with his family that year and I, not being from San Diego, you know, I didn't, didn't know the area real well. I went to, we were going to Rancho Santa Fe or to meet his parents or to meet Jackie and spend the holidays with his family. And on the way there I remember driving through the community and looking around and I was like, oh, no, this is, I was looking at the houses and I was like we need to turn around. I need to go change. I'm not dressed appropriately. But when we got to the house and, you know, it was a ranch-style house and when we went in and I met Jackie and Lee, they were just such a normal welcoming loving family and there was no, no pretentious arrogance at all. They,

GERAGOS: They lived in a, you said a small ranch-style house?

PETERSON: Uh-huh. Yes.

GERAGOS: How big?

PETERSON: Oh, I guess it was maybe, maybe 2000 square feet, a two bedroom home.

GERAGOS: And Scott lived in one bedroom?

PETERSON: Uh-huh.

GERAGOS: I assume that when you came on to the scene it's 1987 or 1988?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Scott's the only child still in the house?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And you meet at some point Scott, is that correct?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And were you welcomed into the family as well? I mean, you talked about Lee and Jackie, did the rest of the siblings welcome you?

PETERSON: Very much so. That first Christmas we spent together I remember they had a gift for me. Jackie had bought me a little pink ballerina doll and I just thought that was so special because I hadn't, I hadn't even met her yet and that just really touched me.

GERAGOS: Were you the first daughter-in-law in the group?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. And did you, did you also, you have children as well, is that correct?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: First grandchildren?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: The, what are your earliest memories of Scott in the family?

PETERSON: I think when I remember meeting him I just remember how much he reminded me of, and maybe it was just my frame or reference at the time because most of my memories were from, you know, the Midwest. But when I met him, and I think that's what part of me drew me to Joe, too, is kind of that, you know, he just reminded me a lot of the kids I grew up with in the Midwest and,

GERAGOS: Is this, I've got it marked as 9 D, D 9 J 1. Do you recognize this picture?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And all the rest of these you gave me, correct?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Do you know what D 9 J 1, what event that was?

PETERSON: I think that might be Thanksgiving of 1987.

GERAGOS: Okay.

JUDGE: 1987?

PETERSON: Yes.

JUDGE: And who are you holding there?

PETERSON: That's my oldest daughter, Brittany.

GERAGOS: Who's now 17?

PETERSON: 17.

GERAGOS: D 9 J 2 looks like somebody in a not so flattering pose playing something?

PETERSON: I think that was maybe on a Sunday afternoon we gathered for dinner or lunch and we were playing badminton out in the front yard, not very well, but that's what we were doing. Me and Scott I think were playing either Ed or Jo and or Lee and Joe.

GERAGOS: Okay. D 9 J 3, is that also you and Scott?

PETERSON: Yeah.

GERAGOS: And the family dog. Was the family get-together often over the holidays?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. Do you have, you told me when I talked to you you had a nickname for Scott or the family had a nickname for Scott, is that correct?

PETERSON: A lot.

GERAGOS: And what were those?

PETERSON: I remember they called him Scooter or Spalding or The Kid. That was always kind of,

GERAGOS: Did he do anything special for you or did he stand out to you at all?

PETERSON: I remember the first,

JUDGE: Ms. Peterson, there's some Kleenex there. Do you want to take a recess?

PETERSON: No, I'm okay.

JUDGE: Do you remember the question. He did some things for you.

JUDGE: Go ahead.

PETERSON: The first, I think it was Christmas that Joe and I were married he gave me a pair of fuzzy bear slippers.

GERAGOS: How old was he at that point?

PETERSON: I think he was 15. I still have them.

GERAGOS: Did you have him, he was an usher in your wedding, correct?

PETERSON: Uh-huh. Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. And you watched I guess basically him grow up from adolescence through obviously, you know, him today, but that's kind of where you came into his life, right?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: When you first met him did he have any kind of a business or job that he did?

PETERSON: He, I think the first business venture I remember him undertaking was golf club repair. I remember him having the tools and the equipment out in the garage to like adjust shaft links or change the grips or, you know, I remember him talking about that and seeing all the equipment he had to do that.

GERAGOS: Was he industrious?

PETERSON: Always. Just over the years you can see how, whether it was, I don't know, something going on at San Diego Crating or things the things he did in his own home or helping us with home improvements at our house, the things he did to open up a restaurant.

GERAGOS: Let me take a couple of those now. You said the home improvements at your house, what kind of home improvements at your house?

PETERSON: Well, he installed a new front door lock for us. He also helped us refinish our kitchen cabinets. He installed a gas line for us for our stove when we were remodeling.

GERAGOS: You said he also, you told me a story about when he opened the restaurant The Shack having a situation where he couldn't get I guess a clearance at some point or get one of the inspectors to sign off, what was that about?

PETERSON: I think, I think you had to have some kind of vent installed over the kitchen or something to, for exhaust and it had to be, you had to have some kind of certification to install it and the only people in that area that did that type of work I think were booked for I think a few months out and they were ready to open the restaurant. That's the only thing they were waiting for. So he actually just went down to Los Angeles or maybe Ventura County or something, took a class or something, got certified to install the vent himself, went back and installed it so he could get the restaurant opened.

GERAGOS: The, I have mentioned before and I have D 9 J 4, this would have been another one of those Thanksgivings?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. That's Scott and Susan and Susan's husband,

PETERSON: Ed.

GERAGOS: Ed there?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. And Lee's in the front?

PETERSON: Uh-huh.

GERAGOS: D 9 J 5, do you know what this is a picture of?

PETERSON: That's our daughter's second birthday.

GERAGOS: Okay.

PETERSON: No, it must be, I'm sorry. That's not right. Yeah, it is.

GERAGOS: It's what?

PETERSON: That's her second birthday.

GERAGOS: And D 9 J 7?

PETERSON: That's a photo of, that's my daughter Brittany on the right, my son Jacob and you can see my son's Zachary's legs and my niece Danica and Scott. That was the anniversary, the 25th anniversary party that we threw for Jackie and Lee up in the San Luis Obispo area. And that's Scott with the kids at that party.

GERAGOS: Okay. D 9 J 6, what is this?

PETERSON: That's, that's a photo that was taken at John and Alison's wedding.

GERAGOS: And John is Scott's brother, Alison is his wife?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: That's D 9 J 8, that's a picture of John and Alison right there?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. D 9 J 9, who are those?

PETERSON: That's my son Jacob and my nieces Rachel and Danica at Scott and Laci's wedding.

GERAGOS: D 9 J 10?

PETERSON: Those are my sons at their wedding.

GERAGOS: D 9 J 11?

PETERSON: That's Zachary with Scott.

GERAGOS: Is that your son,

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: at their wedding? D 9 J 12, is that you?

PETERSON: Uh-huh.

GERAGOS: Is that Laci and Scott?

PETERSON: Yeah.

GERAGOS: The, you know, we've heard a lot about some, some of these industrious things I guess that Scott did for these other witnesses. Were you also aware of him when he went to Arizona working there as well while he was at school some type of a delivery business?

PETERSON: Well, yeah, I remember him talking about having a, I think it was an art delivery business or,

GERAGOS: Is that a theme that at the time that you knew him that he generally, if he was, if he was able to, generally worked?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And as this a kid, at least that you observed, who had, who would not just do anything or be unproductive?

PETERSON: No.

GERAGOS: Would he fill all his time generally with something?

PETERSON: Yes, I even, I don't know if it, I never really heard anybody else talk about it, but I also remember him talking about starting a T-shirt screening business and I don't know if that ever materialized, but there was always, you know, resourcefulness and,

GERAGOS: Okay. You knew him to also, we've heard virtually every witness has mentioned golf and obviously when you met your husband I assume he's a golfer as well?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: All the boys in the family golf?

PETERSON: Yes, I don't know that John picked it up, but the other boys did.

GERAGOS: And is that something that they do together to bond together with?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Do you know Scott to also to kind of finance that habit of playing golf, to always do something golf-related, either working at a golf course or the golf repair business?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. That's the entire time, at least as he was growing up that you knew him?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Would you tell me the, you also told me about an outing, well, I take that back. He also had a name for you, is that correct, and how would he refer to you?

PETERSON: He's always called me his sister.

GERAGOS: Okay. Does that mean anything to you?

PETERSON: Yeah.

GERAGOS: Why?

PETERSON: Well, I think it's just, I think it just shows how this family is. I was never a sister-in-law, I was, he calls me his sister and he introduces me as his sister. He's not, he's not trying to keep people out. He's not trying to exclude. He's inclusive. And I think that was also shown at their wedding when, when Don came. Don is one of the children that Jackie had given up for adoption and most of us met Don and his wife at Scott and Laci's wedding. And by the end of that weekend Don's wife came up to me and she was just in tears and thanking us and thanking our family for pulling Don and her in as we did. She, she said she couldn't explain what it meant to Don to find his mom and find his siblings and to be so welcome by them.

GERAGOS: Is that an, I don't want to overstate it so, is that something that you just tend to characterize this family as?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Where does that spring from?

PETERSON: I think it just comes from, I think Susan used the word blended maybe yesterday. I think you could very well choose to be from broken homes when there's a divorce, but this is a family that blended and blended well and has continued to do so.

GERAGOS: The, do you have any, I think yesterday when I talked to you also you talked about how Scott had picked up playing chess, is that right?

JUDGE: I didn't hear you, Mr. Geragos.

GERAGOS: Playing chess.

GERAGOS: You told me about that as well?

PETERSON: Yes. I just remember one of the, I think I probably only, Joe and I hadn't been married very long and one afternoon we were at the house and I don't know how it came up but Scott and I decided to play a game of chess and probably I'm probably a little bit more competitive and was looking forward to the challenge given the fact that I was spending most of my time with toddlers, but I remember beating him and I was, you know, kind of, he doesn't remember that but,

GERAGOS: Since he's been incarcerated you sent him a chess strategy book?

PETERSON: I did.

GERAGOS: And give him something to work on?

PETERSON: I'm not going to play him anymore, he'll definitely beat me.

GERAGOS: You had met Laci early on in their courtship, is that right?

PETERSON: Yes, I think Joe and I were the first ones to meet her.

GERAGOS: Where was that?

PETERSON: They came down to San Diego for a weekend.

GERAGOS: Do you remember what year that was?

PETERSON: It probably would have been 1995.

GERAGOS: Okay. Do you have any memory of that first meeting?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: What was that?

PETERSON: They drove down in the town. They actually came with the business I was working there at the time. And they pulled up and came in the door and just both of them grinning ear to ear. And Laci, she took my breath away. She was just bubbly and fun and energetic and beautiful. And I just, I couldn't use enough words to describe her. In fact, when I would call, when I called Susan to try to describe her, I think I just kept going on and on just trying to find the right words and I don't know that I ever got there.

GERAGOS: Over the years as their relationship developed and they ended up getting married, you had, your kids were growing up as well, correct?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Okay. How does Scott interact with your three?

PETERSON: He's, they've always loved to see their Uncle Scott. Always looked forward to it when the boys were going to be in the wedding and they had their little tuxedos on and they looked like their Uncle Scott. They were so proud. And he's come to Brittany's volleyball, the boys' soccer. He's gone fishing with the boys. He's golfed with them. Let them drive a golf cart.

GERAGOS: When you say he's gone to their games, he actually comes to the kids' games? How old are the kids? I know Brittany is 17 or 18, how old are the other two?

PETERSON: Zachary's 15 and Jacob's 13.

GERAGOS: He would go out of his way to go the games?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Soccer games?

PETERSON: Soccer, volleyball.

GERAGOS: Okay. Does that mean anything or did that mean anything to the kids?

PETERSON: Absolutely.

GERAGOS: Other than that, how does he interact when you guys get together? Would he call on holidays, things like that, was that something that the kids would look forward to seeing him?

PETERSON: Yes, very much so.

GERAGOS: Would you characterize him as a positive influence on them?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: How would you characterize the impact so far of him being incarcerated and in jail for this period of time on the kids?

PETERSON: It's been very difficult.

GERAGOS: In what way?

PETERSON: They don't get to see him, they don't get to hug him.

GERAGOS: Does he correspond with them?

PETERSON: Yes, he does.

GERAGOS: Is that important to them?

PETERSON: Yeah, when the letters come from him, we all do this, we grab our letters and we go hide and we go read our letters and we don't share. We read our own letters and just keep them close to our heart because that's all we have right now.

GERAGOS: You've known the family for these last, I guess ever since the day that Laci went missing on December 24th and when Scott's arrest on the 18th, and then all of these legal proceedings. And since that time what kind of an impact has this had on the family?

PETERSON: <crying>

GERAGOS: Judge, maybe we can take the break right now.

<recess>.

GERAGOS: Good afternoon, Janey. I kind of skipped through these pictures without letting you talk about them. I guess the first thing I would do is ask you. One of these you mentioned was a 25th anniversary party? Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about that? That's D9J-7. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

PETERSON: I don't remember what year it was. I think it was probably 1996. And Jackie and Lee were going to be celebrating their 25th anniversary, so we decided to throw them a party. And they were spending most of their time in Morro Bay. Scott was up there in the area with them. And we wanted it to be a surprise. So all the rest of us kids were down in San Diego. So we really, the burden really fell on Scott to do a lot of that planning as far as, you know, we didn't know who most of their friends were up there. And he knew who they all were. And he tracked down all their addresses. And we probably spent a good two to three months preparing for that party. And he was very much involved in every aspect of it. He had to do all the damage control for all the people who didn't notice the word "Surprise". And he went and picked the facility, what food was available, and,

GERAGOS: I assume it was a memorable location?

PETERSON: It was very nice. We all came together and just honored Jackie and Lee for their marriage and the family that they brought together.

GERAGOS: When, you said you thought that was in 1996?

PETERSON: I believe so. I think Scott and Laci were married the next year.

GERAGOS: So they were both there at that event?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: Did you ever have a, you talked about up in Morro Bay. Do you have memories of Scott when he was living up in that area?

PETERSON: Yes. We would make, I know Joe and I and the kids would always go up every Thanksgiving, probably be one or two other times a year that we make the trip up there. And we would go eat at Abbas where Scott worked, and,

GERAGOS: We have heard about that before. That's a restaurant that he worked at as a waiter, I guess?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: That was to work his way through school?

PETERSON: Uh-huh.

GERAGOS: When you would eat there, was there, I mean did he appear to be industrious and productive and positive when he was there?

PETERSON: Yeah, very much so. I remember the first time we went in there he was waiting on our table and telling us what the specials are, and he's got the napkin draped over his arm and giving us the line recommendations. You know just grinning. And I'm just looking at him thinking, you know, all the, I didn't even know what half the food was. He was describing how it was cooked, or, it was just was really fun. And he was an excellent waiter. And it was fun to see him enjoying what he was doing.

GERAGOS: I think you had, at one point, told me that he's kind of a klutz. And to at least memorialize that, at one point you reflected that in a Christmas gift to him?

PETERSON: Yeah. I think it just kind of came along with his willingness to tackle whatever needed to be done. He would often injure himself. And so one year we got him a big first aid kit for Christmas.

GERAGOS: He also, I think you also told me a story about him teaching you and the kids something up in the snow in the mountains?

PETERSON: He taught me and my boys how to snowboard. I don't know it was a, we were all pretty proficient by the middle of the day. But it was a very fun experience to just all get to learn something together. And he taught us. He took us up the chairlift. And we didn't quite know how to stop yet. We soon figured it out, and,

GERAGOS: The number of these pictures that I showed the jury before the break appeared to be what looked like Thanksgiving dinners, is that right?

PETERSON: Uh-huh.

GERAGOS: And I don't know if I have got them in the right order. But D9J-4 and D9J-5?

PETERSON: That's the birthday.

GERAGOS: D9J-8?

PETERSON: Uh-huh.

GERAGOS: You told me there was some significance to the Thanksgiving dinners in terms of Laci and Scott. Could you describe for the jury what that was, or what you told me?

PETERSON: It was our, that holiday was always a holiday we all spent together. It was, there were other times throughout the year we might see each other. Thanksgiving was always there. And you could just look back through the years and see how we watched Scott and Laci grow up and mature as a couple. And first as boyfriend and girlfriend, and then as a married couple. And I used to remember the comments that she would make about our kids, or Scott might make that, you know, first it would be they would comment about how watching rambunctiousness was good birth control. Just fun to come there and play with all the kids, and then they would get to go home. And they would, I remember they progressed from in the, I remember Laci first talking about, we don't know if we are going to have kids. Then the next year would come along, and they would say probably going to have the kids after we're 30. I remember thinking I wish I had a tape recorder, you know, to play this back, you know, in five, ten years for her. And then another Thanksgiving or two later, she was taking her Folic Acid. They were trying to get pregnant. And it was just neat to watch them mature and grow as a couple.

GERAGOS: Now, the one picture I have shown you of, you had given to me, I had shown the jury. D9J-12. This is Laci and Scott throwing you, and looks like the kids are all around there, is that right?

PETERSON: Yeah. That was a Thanksgiving. And they were swinging all the kids like that. And the kids just couldn't get enough. And they just kept going back and getting in line, and "Me next, me next". And I jumped down on the ground and I said, "Me next." And without even a second thought they picked me up. And I was just laughing so hard, because I could not believe that Laci could get me off the ground, and that they were swinging me high. That's just how they were with the kids. They were always mixing in with the kids.

GERAGOS: I had asked you before the, before the lunch break, you know, the effect that this has had on the family and you and Joe. I guess I specifically want to ask about, first of all, the effect that it's had on Joe, your husband.

PETERSON: I think that Joe and Scott have a special one because they are both, they are both babies. Joe is the youngest of his mother, and Scott is Jackie's youngest. And there is a bond between them. And so much of what's gone on, there is really nothing we can do a lot about. And it's been very hard for Joe to watch this happen.

GERAGOS: His relationship with Scott something that he values?

PETERSON: Yes, very much.

GERAGOS: As the, I know that since I have alluded to it this morning, about since Scott has been incarcerated, you said that you had sent him a chess strategy book. While he's been incarcerated, have you done anything else, anything else in terms of correspondence, or books, anything of that nature?

PETERSON: That's about all we can do. We can visit. We can write. We can send books. And that's all. So we do a lot of that.

GERAGOS: Has he gotten you, is the sending him books, does that have any effect on you?

PETERSON: Absolutely. Even just a letter writing. It's incredible to have to learn how to write a letter. And I think it's probably been one of the most therapeutic things for a lot of our family. I don't know that we maybe have recognized it for that. But to, when you experience the depth of grief and sadness, and you are, only way to communicate it is on paper, you have to figure out a way to do it. And I think for all of us to go through that process it's what we have had to do. So that's what we have done. And, like I said, it's taught me how to write, and it's shown me what an incredible writer Scott is. His not being able to do a lot of things, and read is only one of

them. It's made me want to read more. So we sometimes read the same book, and,

GERAGOS: Is that something that's happened since he's been incarcerated where you would send him a book, you will send a suggestion back, there will be some kind of an ongoing dialogue?

PETERSON: I never read before he was incarcerated, so, yes.

GERAGOS: Never read, meaning what?

PETERSON: I have always, I have just never, I guess I bragged about being illiterate. But I mean it's just a way that we've been able to go another level, and another way to connect and share with each other, because your options are so limited.

GERAGOS: I know I met a week ago, I guess, your kids and talked to them a little bit with Brittany. Brittany has been writing. She's your oldest daughter?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And she is, I guess, seemed to me at least from talking with her, extremely moved about letters that she gets, is that a fair statement?

PETERSON: Yes.

GERAGOS: And has that had any effect on them, has Scott writing them?

PETERSON: Yes. He writes all the kids. All of them individually. And they all write him. They will draw him pictures. They will send him pictures. They will send him puzzles and math questions. And he'll send them back. They will talk about motorcycle riding, and the sports they are doing, and music, and whatever the kids are involved in that they share with him. He writes back and prompts them and encourages them. He's an ear for them.

GERAGOS: I would assume that the loss of Laci had a profound impact on the family as well. You consider her as a sister-in-law, more a sister? How would you characterize your relationship with her?

PETERSON: She was one of the family. She is our sister.

GERAGOS: How do you think the, I know this is an awful question, but obviously this is the work this the jury has to do right now. That's why we're here. How would the execution, killing, putting to death Scott Peterson, how would that affect the family and Joe and you and the kids?

PETERSON: I think the one thing that we have learned in all of this is how important life is. I think every one of us would give up everything we have, where it's money, or our homes, every stitch of clothing, because that's how important life is. And that's evident to all of us.

GERAGOS: Thank you. I have no further questions, your Honor.