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[AP \(Hosted\)](#) DENNIS MURPHY USA Mar 21 2:55 pm

REVERSAL OF FORTUNE - Part 3

court): Defense would call Doctor **Henry Lee** to the stand. (**Henry Lee** in court) DENNIS MURPHY
(voiceover): Celebrity medical examiner
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REVERSAL OF FORTUNE - Part 3

By DENNIS MURPHY | AP (Hosted) | Mar 21

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driveway of the gracious rambling house in a better neighborhood of Durham, North Carolina. The homeowners Michael and Kathleen Peterson are out back on the patio, as the story goes, finishing a bottle of wine. In the living room, the Christmas tree is already up. The grown Peterson children expected home for the holiday. Kathleen was always happiest in that season as her daughter Caitlin remembers it.>

Caitlin>

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Yet, if Kathleen was bludgeoned to death as prosecutors thought, problem. Investigators hadn't found the murder weapon. Prosecutors believed it was a hollow fireplace tool called a blowpoke, seen here in family photographs. It had been a gift from Candace to her sister a decade before.

CANDACE ZAMPERINI: I just found it to be a great gift. I definitely saw it by the fireplace.

(Exterior of mansion; droplets of blood)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Prosecutors thought Peterson had ferreted the blow poke out of the house that night after the attack. If he had, that could explain those blood drops on the walkway.

FREDA BLACK: Blood dropping from the murder weapon as it was potentially disposed of somewhere outside the dwelling.

(Court proceedings; photo of court proceedings)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): But the State thought some of its most powerful evidence was what the medical examiner found on the top of Kathleen`s head. Seven tears to the scalp.

JIM HARDIN (in court): Do you recall any case where someone died falling down the steps and there were multiple lacerations?

DR. DEBORAH RADISCH (voiceover): No.

JIM HARDIN (in court): Were you able to determine in your opinion what the manner of her death was?

DR. DEBORAH RADISCH (in court): The manner of death in this case is homicide.

(Staircase; photo of Elizabeth Ratliff; courtroom proceedings)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Injuries that were eerily similar to those suffered by the Peterson family friend from Germany all those years before, Elizabeth Ratliff. And the jury almost in a trial within the trial heard that story. The long ago friends Germany testified to their suspicions about Michael Peterson`s involvement in another stairway death, another one with so much blood.

AMYBETH BERNER (in court): The blood was up so high that I-- I couldn`t figure out how did the blood get up there.

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): It was the bow that wrapped up the State`s case.

FREDA BLACK (in court): Do you really believe that lightning strikes twice in the same place? Do you?

(Michael Peterson; photo of Elizabeth Ratliff)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Michael Peterson had been the last person known to have seen not only Kathleen Peterson alive but also Elizabeth Ratliff.

APHRODITE JONES: That`s a whole lot of women dead at the bottom of the stairs in this guy`s life. Don`t you think?

(Exterior of mansion; bloodstains; wine bottle and glasses; photo of Kathleen and Michael Peterson; photo of Michael Peterson; staircase)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): So there was the prosecution`s case for conviction. Blood evidence. A staged scene. And the trigger. The violent confrontation between husband and wife that resulted when a secret appetite for men was exposed. And not a bit of that made any sense the defense was about to tell the jury.

(Photo of blow poke; exterior of the storehouse)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): The prosecution said it was missing. Guess what turned up.

CLAYTON PETERSON: My heart started pounding.

(Michael Peterson in court; court proceedings)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): And the defense`s answer to that damning blood evidence.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

(Staircase; bottle of wine and glasses; Margaret and Martha Ratliff in court; court proceedings; Michael Peterson in court)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): What happened on that back staircase? Was it the violent culmination of a perfect storm of domestic stress, as the prosecution held or was it really something not criminal at all? An unfortunate accident. For months, Michael Peterson's girls Margaret and Martha sat in court suffering as prosecutors labeled their dad a killer.

MARTHA RATLIFF: They would accuse my father of double murders or the wife murder or the staircase murders and we couldn't stand up and say, wait a second, this isn't true.

(Court proceedings; Michael Peterson in court; photo of Kathleen Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): But now it was lead defense attorney David Rudolf's turn to convince a jury of that. Kathleen's dead, he said, was a simple fatal accident. Nothing else made sense.

DAVID RUDOLF (in court): The truth is that Kathleen Peterson after drinking some wine and some champagne and taking some Valium tried to walk up a narrow, poorly lit stairway in flip-flops and she fell and she bled to death.

(Wine bottle and wine glasses on table; exterior of mansion; photo of Michael Peterson's home office computer; court proceedings; photo of Michael Peterson; photo of Kathleen and Michael Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): There had been no violent confrontation that night, Rudolf argued. No discovery of explicit emails by Kathleen. All that he believed was a fantasy of the prosecution team. Michael Peterson was bisexual, sure, but that didn't mean the Petersons weren't an extraordinarily happy couple.

DAVID RUDOLF: Did Michael have sexual needs that he fulfilled outside the marriage? Okay, he did. But that didn't mean that their relationship was anything other than great.

(Court proceedings)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Even Brad, the escort, testified that Peterson wrote to him about how much he loved his wife.

BRENT "BRAD" WOLGAMOTT (in court): In his emails, unlike most of my clients, he indicated that he had a great relationship. Most clients don't want to say anything about the relationship. He indicated he had a warm relationship with his wife and nothing would ever destroy that.

(Photo of Kathleen and Michael Peterson; photo of Bill and Michael Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): And the defense thought Kathleen could have known about her husband's sexual inclinations. Bill Peterson says his brother's interest in men was no secret to him.

Were you shocked to learn that your brother has at least bisexual inclinations?

BILL PETERSON: No. I have known that since I was fourteen.

(Exterior of mansion; photo of Kathleen and Michael Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): And even if Kathleen had discovered her husband's bisexuality that night, Bill says an explosive fight wasn't the likely outcome.

BILL PETERSON: I think she would be the kind of person that would talk-- talk through something like that. Even seeking external help if she wanted- - if she felt she needed it.

(Photo of Kathleen and Michael Peterson and family; exterior of mansion)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): As for the Petersons` money problems, not so the defense argued. Contrary to being on the brink of financial collapse, the couple`s net worth, assets minus debt was a tidy pile. The State`s financial analyst admitted as much in cross-examination.

THOMAS MAHER (in court): The situation in December of 2001 was a couple worth approximately one and a half million dollars after paying off their debts?

UNIDENTIFIED MAN (in court): That`s correct.

(Michael Peterson in court; autopsy report diagram; photos of bloodstains)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): The defense now had to scale the Mt. Everest of the case. The forensics, explaining to the jury all that blood. How could a simple fall have resulted in spatter so high up the staircase walls?

DAVID RUDOLF (in court): Defense would call Doctor Henry Lee to the stand.

(Henry Lee in court)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Celebrity medical examiner Doctor Henry Lee of O.J. case fame would show the jury in theatrical fashion just how Kathleen falling and staggering about coughing up blood could have accounted for the spray.

DR. HENRY LEE (in court): An injured person can walking, can move, can shake their head, can move their arm, can step forward.

DAVID RUDOLF: Obviously, the blood all around was due to her being alive and moving around for some period of time. It-- it didn`t have to do with what inflicted the wounds.

(Photo of bloodstained shorts; photos of blood stains; court proceedings)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): And the blood on his shorts? That could have happened, the defense said, while Michael Peterson was cradling his wife. As for the other blood evidence, the police said prove that Michael Peterson had tampered with the scene, drops of blood in the house and more on the walkway outside, none of that could be trusted, attorney Rudolf told the jury.

DAVID RUDOLF (in court): The blood in that area had been completely altered. The scene at the house had been completely contaminated.

(Photos of police at residence; staircase; Michael and Todd Peterson in court; photos of blood on floor)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): The defense argued the police had failed to secure the staircase for their first hour on the scene. Allowing Michael and even his son Todd to track Kathleen`s blood throughout the house.

DAVID RUDOLF: Michael goes up to Kathleen with the police watching, hugs her, Todd takes him puts him on the couch where there`s blood transfer and then Todd says, can I go get some soda and a glass? And the police say, sure, and here goes Todd walking around the kitchen with blood on his hands.

(Exterior of mansion; blood stains; newspaper column; police car)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): The defense believed the blood evidence was misinterpreted by overzealous investigators who may have had it in for Peterson from the start. Remember those newspaper columns taking potshots at the local PD? Perhaps his family thought this was payback time.

CLAYTON PETERSON: He did not make a lot of friends with the police force and so perhaps they could have, you know, been doing little extra to him.

(Cemetery and grave of Elizabeth Ratliff; courtroom; exterior of courthouse; photo of Michael Peterson in court)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): As for the supposedly suspicious death of Margaret and Martha's mom, Elizabeth Ratliff in Germany, the defense treated it as granted a weird coincidence; but legally here in Durham, North Carolina, completely irrelevant. Peterson was never charged with Ratliff's murder and maintains he had nothing to do with her death.

DAVID RUDOLF: What you had was a sort of circular argument because she died at the foot of a stairway, then Kathleen Peterson must have been murdered and because Kathleen Peterson was murdered at the foot a stairway, then Elizabeth Ratliff must have been murdered. Well, the reality is that Elizabeth Ratliff died of a stroke. And that was determined by an autopsy at the time and it was never suspicious until Kathleen died.

(Bill Peterson; staircase)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Peterson's brother agrees. Investigators had been called to the scene in Germany and found no indications of foul play.

Two dead women at the bottom of a stairway.

BILL PETERSON: Seventeen years apart? You know, coincidence do happen.

(Photos of autopsy report diagrams in court proceedings; neuropathologist testifying in court)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Then there were those ghastly lacerations on Kathleen's head which the State's medical examiner attributed to a beating. Defense Attorney Rudolf countered with an expert of his own. A neuropathologist who noted what he didn't find, no skull or bone fractures.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (in court): Kathleen Peterson's injuries were the result of a fall and not the result of a beating.

DAVID RUDOLF: There was absolutely no fractures anywhere, no fractures to her fingers, to her arms, to her skull. And there was absolutely no injury to the brain and that's just almost an impossibility if what you're doing is beating somebody with a metal object.

(Exterior of mansion; staircase; jury being led on a tour of the Peterson mansion)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Just as unlikely, Rudolf said, was the prosecution's contention that the brutal attack took place in a cramped stairwell. If Michael Peterson had been beating his wife with a metal object, wouldn't there have been nicks and dings in the walls? The defense took the jury on a tour of the Cedar Street home to show them there were none.

DAVID RUDOLF: It just defies imagination to think that he could have done that in that space and not caused some collateral damage.

(Court proceedings; photo of blowpoke)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): And for a final exclamation point, the defense had a Perry Mason moment up its sleeve. The prosecution had insisted throughout the murder weapon used to bludgeon Kathleen Peterson was the fireplace blow poke, only police never found it. But near the end of the trial, a stunning revelation.

CLAYTON PETERSON: My heart started pounding.

(Exterior of garage; photo of blowpoke)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Peterson's son Clayton said while fixing his car, he'd come across the missing blow poke. It was there all along, he said, and the cops had simply missed it.

CLAYTON PETERSON: Here it was in the basement just sitting there in the corner, covered in dust and cobwebs.

(Court proceedings)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Clayton ran upstairs to tell his father who he says met the news with skepticism.

CLAYTON PETERSON: Dad thought it was a setup. He thought that somebody had planted it there and that the police were going to come storming in to the house.

(Court proceedings)

DAVID RUDOLF (in court): That's a blow poke, isn't it?

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): In court, the defense played the moment for all it was worth, getting the lead detective to agree that if this was indeed the murder weapon, it was completely intact.

DAVID RUDOLF (in court): See any dents in there? Even like a tiny little indentation.

ART HOLLAND (in court): Doesn't appear to have any dents.

DAVID RUDOLF: That was the blow poke. Well, if it is, then what was the murder weapon?

(Court proceedings; photo of Kathleen and Michael Peterson; court proceedings; photo of blowpoke; Margaret and Martha Ratliff in court)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Lawyer David Rudolf thought he peppered reasonable doubt all the way through the State's circumstantial case, from the questionable analysis of the blood in the stairway, to the marital perfect storm that wasn't, to the murder weapon that wasn't missing at all and was no more than a dusty fireplace tool. The Peterson camp was confident.

MARTHA RATLIFF: We were so positive that he was going to get off because in our minds it was the clearest thing in the world.

(Jury deliberation room)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): But would the jury agree?

(Jury box)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): The verdict.

BILL PETERSON: I thought that we had won that case hands down.

(Photo of Kathleen and Michael Peterson)

MICHAEL PETERSON: I didn't do anything.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN (in court): We, the twelve members of the jury unanimously find the defendant to be--

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

(Exterior of courthouse; jury deliberation room)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): After five months of trial, one of the longest anyone could remember in North Carolina history, the Peterson case was finally in the hands of the jury.

MARTHA RATLIFF: I had this moment of doubt where I was like what if it doesn't happen? What if he gets convicted? And was like, no, there is no way.

(Michael Peterson in court; Margaret and Martha Ratliff; Bill Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): The Peterson kids were confident their dad would be going home with them. And Michael's brother Bill, a lawyer himself, was certain the prosecutors had not proven their case.

BILL PETERSON: I thought that we had won that case hands down. I could not see anyone coming away from that trial with the conclusion beyond a reasonable doubt that my brother inflicted a beating that caused her death. I just did not see it.

(Jury box; photos of court proceedings)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): But it seemed as though the jury would never come back. Day one: no verdict. Ditto day two and three.

And the jury's deliberating and you're waiting?

BILL PETERSON: Yeah.

DENNIS MURPHY: And you're waiting and you're waiting.

BILL PETERSON: Yeah. We were getting more and more optimistic, too. Because the longer the jury's out, we're thinking, well, they're having trouble, they're having doubts.

(Court proceedings)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Finally, on day four, they got word. The jury had a verdict.

CLAYTON PETERSON: We were absolutely terrified. We knew the-- the magnitude of this decision.

(Michael Peterson in court)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): A hush, and then the clerk began to read.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN (in court): We the twelve members of the jury unanimously find the defendant to be guilty of first-degree murder.

(Kathleen and Michael Peterson`s children reacting in court)

CLAYTON PETERSON (voiceover): I felt violently ill. We all, sort of, reached over and grabbed each other. You know was if we we`re trying to hold on to the family. It was definitely a terrible moment of my life.

MARTHA RATLIFF: As soon as we heard the first juror say guilty, I just was weeping like I was being taken over by grief and shock.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN (in court): Is anything you want to say before the court imposes judgment?

MICHAEL PETERSON (in court): I would like to say--

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Michael Peterson turned to his kids--

MARGARET RATLIFF: He said, it`s okay. it`s okay. I think on his part he was just trying to calm himself down but also I think he felt like his role was to protect us.

MARTHA RATLIFF: He was acknowledging that we had a huge loss and that we had just lost everything and that it was going to be okay and he was going to find some way to make it okay.

(Michael Peterson in court)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Michael Peterson turned to face the judge for the reading of the sentence.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN (in court): The defendant is imprisoned in North Carolina Department of Corrections for the remainder of his natural life without the benefit of parole.

(Candace Zamperini; court proceedings)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): For Kathleen`s sister Candace, the verdict was nothing to celebrate.

CANDACE ZAMPERINI: It makes me cry when I heard it. There`s no joy in this. There`s just great sadness.

(Michael Peterson in court; court proceedings; David Rudolf in court)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): And Peterson`s defense attorney David Rudolf was racked with would have, could have, should have doubts.

DAVID RUDOLF: I was devastated. It made me question myself.

(David Rudolf in court)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): As one of North Carolina`s most battle hardened criminal defense attorneys, he knew how slim the chances were for a retrial once a case went on to the appellate court.

DAVID RUDOLF: And I can`t imagine a worse fate than being in jail for something you didn`t do, particularly when it`s a loved one who`s died. You don`t even have a chance to grieve that person.

(Bill Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Bill Peterson who had moved to Durham to be with his brother through the trial was in disbelief.

BILL PETERSON: I went back to the house and I broke down. That's the worst day of our lives, our collective lives, absolutely the worst.

(Bill Peterson; exterior of mansion; Margaret and Martha Ratliff; exterior of prison)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): The brother stepped in to help in whatever way he could. There was the big house to sell. Margaret and Martha about to be without a roof over their heads would have to move to Nevada with him. He visited Michael in prison to get things started.

BILL PETERSON: My brother had to sign some papers, and power of attorney of me. So that we could wrap up his life and he came up and tried to reach his hands through the glass and crying. That was bad.

(Exterior of prison)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): The Peterson children resigned themselves to the harsh reality that prison was now their father's home. They visited him whenever they could.

MARGARET RATLIFF: I would just sob every time I left. You hold it together for dad because there's-- why would you cry in front of dad? That's not going to help him. But then when you leave, you know, you're-- you're sobbing in your car.

(Stream; Michael Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Years passed. The girls' now young women watched their father age. Still, Michael Peterson told his daughters he wasn't giving up.

MARTHA RATLIFF: We would have hope for every single appeal and every single time it would get beaten down.

(Exterior of courthouse; Michael Peterson in jail)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): By the end of 2007, the North Carolina Supreme Court rejected Michael Peterson's request for a new trial. For Peterson, it seemed to be the end of the line.

CLAYTON PETERSON: He wasn't going to come out. That was the hard part.

(Photo of Michael Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): With little to lose, he spoke in prison with Aphrodite Jones who had written a book on his case.

MICHAEL PETERSON: I know I'm not guilty. I know I didn't hurt Kathleen. It's very difficult for me to accept the fact that I'm a prisoner, a convicted murderer. It just-- it was just nonsense.

(Photos of Kathleen and Michael Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Peterson said he loved his wife and his interest in men was not an issue in the marriage.

APHRODITE JONES: Did Kathleen know--

MICHAEL PETERSON: Yes, of course, she knew. I mean, it just was not a major factor in-- in-- in our lives. There`s love and then there`s sex. And that`s what that was.

(Exterior of mansion)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Peterson told Aphrodite he and Kathleen were enjoying a pleasant evening at home the night she died.

MICHAEL PETERSON: We had sex. She took a bath. We came downstairs. She started to cook. It was a-- a pasta thing.

(Ripples in pool; staircase)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): It was a night like many others, Peterson said, until he found Kathleen at the bottom of the staircase.

MICHAEL PETERSON: People would say, how do you know she fell down the stairs? Well, well, you know, you come in, you`ve been drinking a lot. She has been drinking a good-- great deal. You find somebody at the bottom of the stairs. Hmm. I guess they fell down the stairs.

(Photo of Kathleen Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): He said he never would have hurt Kathleen.

MICHAEL PETERSON: I didn`t do anything. And I guess basically still in my heart in my-- I like to believe Kathleen fell down the stairs. But nobody buys that one.

APHRODITE JONES: His words were, but nobody buys that one.

DENNIS MURPHY: Wrongfully accused. Wrongfully convicted.

APHRODITE JONES: Absolutely. Wrongfully accused and wrongfully convicted and-- and he`s going to find a way out of this.

(Cemetery; prison gate; photo of Michael Peterson in jail)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Out in a coffin or out the front gate? The coffin seemed more likely. But then, life can take some very strange twists and turns.

(Photo of Kathleen Peterson; autopsy report diagram; microscope slides; bird)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): A new theory of how Kathleen Peterson died. A review of the slides showed what? Traces of bird feather?

BILL PETERSON: Yes.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

(Exterior of prison; Michael Peterson in court; prison)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): There are pleasant places to idle away your golden years, but North Carolina`s Nash Correctional Institution isn`t one of them. But that`s where Michael Peterson, father,

novelist and wife killer according to a jury of his peers, was incarcerated. Just another number in a cell block with other felons, life without the possibility of parole.

DAVID RUDOLF: The only way Michael was ever going to get out of prison was-- was in a coffin.

(Bill Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Out in Reno, though, Peterson's lookalike younger brother hadn't given up hope, not yet. Bill Peterson, the lawyer, had been digging ceaselessly for years to come up with something new in his brother's case that the court might consider. But it was the longest of long shots after the appeals fizzled.

Did the lawyer in you say that's it, my brother's done?

BILL PETERSON: No. That's when the real hard work started. We're out of money, out of lawyers. And so that's when the-- the burden fell on me and whoever would help me.

(Exterior of courthouse; Bill Peterson; Cedar Street road sign; exterior of mansion; moon)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Bill Peterson spent hours in the Durham County courthouse combing through the district attorney's piled high boxes of evidence. Was there something that had been overlooked? And he wasn't the only supporter nursing alternate theories of Kathleen Peterson's death. There's a neighbor on Cedar Street, an attorney, who had an intriguing idea for what he believes happened that night. His scenario of an accidental death has come to be known as the owl theory.

BILL PETERSON: He has seen owls in-- in the area. He thought that this was very plausible. He put together this whole theory himself.

(Exterior of mansion at night; owl)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): So here's how brother Bill envisions the owl theory happened. Kathleen, who has spent the day putting up Christmas decorations goes out front that night while Michael is back by the pool. She's checking on her lawn display beneath the trees.

BILL PETERSON: The owl flew down and landed on Kathleen's head and then tore her scalp in a manner that would be consistent with the lacerations that were found on her scalp.

(Bloodstains on walkway and door and staircase; bloodstains; owl)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Bleeding, Kathleen drops on the walk and smear on a door as she struggles in to the house. Getting only as far as the staircase where she joins the defense's depiction of falling, passing out, coming to and rising again only to fall for the final time. The DA's office had been approached with the owl theory during the trial and dismissed it outright.

What's wrong with the owl theory?

FREDA BLACK: The lack of feathers, the lack of other things that might be left behind if an owl had, in fact, viciously attacked her was basically why it didn't seem to make sense.

BILL PETERSON: The cops are making a big joke of this. They put a picture of the owl on their-- their most wanted list.

(Jury box; exterior of mansion; case notes)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): So the Peterson jury never did hear about an owl theory. But zip ahead five years. The neighbor who was advocating for it was still looking for something to back his theory up. Sure enough, there it was in the original case notes file. A feather.

TIM THOMPSON: You have to magnify them four hundred times just to see them.

(Tim Thompson` microscope slides)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Tim Thompson owner of Associated Microscopes was hired to examine the slide of that feather at the district attorney`s office.

TIM THOMPSON: They grow under the paws of an owl. When they attack something, they leave behind the small particle feathers.

(Tim Thompson; microscope slides)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Thompson peered through his microscope, studying a clump of hair found clutched in Kathleen Peterson`s hand. Tangled in the hair were not one but two minute feathers. A surprise, he says, both to the detectives and the assistant DA sitting with him.

TIM THOMPSON: They were just surprised that their lab people had not found it.

(Bill Peterson)

DENNIS MURPHY (voiceover): Bill Peterson was surprised, too. Here was further proof that an owl may have attacked Kathleen.