Laci Denise Rocha was born on May 4th, 1975 in Modesto, California to Dennis and Sharon Rocha. She had one sister, Amy, and 2 brothers, Brent and Nathan. She was named after a beautiful girl that her mother had known in school and she grew up on a dairy farm.

She loved the farm, she loved plants, gardening, looking after animals and being a busy homebody. When Lacy was 2 years old, her parents got a divorce and her and her siblings moved to Modesto with their mother and visited their dad on the farm on weekends. Her mother re-married a man named Ron Grantski, who became their stepdad.

Laci was a beautiful and popular girl in school: she was a cheerleader in junior high and high school and was described as warm, bubbly, friendly, and sociable. After graduating from Thomas Downey High School, she enrolled at California Polytechnic State University, where she majored in ornamental horticulture (which is studying the ways that plants can be used for aesthetics, like flower arrangements, landscape design and more). In 1994, when Laci was 19 years old, she would visit a friend who worked at a restaurant called “Pacific Café”. It also happened to be one of her mother’s favorite restaurants- her parents lived in Moro Bay. This is where she met 23-year-old Scott Peterson, who was working there at the time as a waiter. She wrote her number down on a piece of paper and asked her friend to give it to him. He, at first, threw it away, thinking that it was a joke to humiliate him, but after the friend told him that it wasn’t a joke, he got the number out of the trash and gave Laci a call. This is a sign of his low self-esteem, something he seemed to generally keep well hidden.

Laci was so excited and immediately told her mother that she had met the man she was going to marry. For their first date, Scott took Laci on a deep-sea fishing trip, which is a little odd. It’s as if Scott projected his own interests on others, even romantic partners, the way that his own father projected himself onto Scott (more on this later). Laci reportedly got seasick- so it’s not certain if the date ended prematurely, but she was infatuated with him, and their dating life continued.

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Scott Lee Peterson was born on October 24th, 1972 in San Diego, California to Lee Arthur Peterson and Jackie Helen Latham.

His dad worked for a trucking company and later was a businessman who owned a crate packaging company and Jackie owned a boutique called “The Put On”, a dress shop.

Lee and Jackie had 6 children from previous relationships. Jackie had a son in 1963, Don, who she gave up for adoption, then a daughter in 1965, Anne, who she also gave up for adoption, and then she had John, who she decided to keep. After 1 year of marriage, Lee and Jackie had a son together, which was Scott. And he grew up alongside his half-brother, John.

**Background:**

Jackie grew up in an orphanage after the murder of her father (by a previous employer who got fired) caused her mother to have a nervous breakdown. Her mother died when she had just finished school (18). She got a scholarship at a catholic school which allowed her to live back with her mother.

Anne Bird was adopted in 1965 as a baby and is Scott Peterson’s biological sister. Jackie also has a son called Don who she gave up for adoption. She wrote a book: “Blood Brother: 33 Reasons My Brother Scott Peterson is guilty” (2005). She said that Scott flirted with her babysitter when Laci was missing and said that the police were looking in the wrong place for her.

Scott was their golden child, and they showered him with love and attention, quite contrary to how they treated John. Lee bonded with Scott like an artist to clay, ready to sculpt him into his perfect son, one who loved to play golf, hunt, and fish just like he did. He attended Painted Rock Middle School and was described as a very disciplined, quiet, responsibly kid. By the time he was 14, he could beat his dad at golf and wanted to go pro like his teammate, Phil Mickelson. Scott’s dad told him that if he shot par, he would buy him a Ferrari, so naturally, he worked his butt off and by the time he was 16, he shot par. Of course, he didn’t get a Ferrari, but rather, a 2nd hand Peugeot Sedan, which his dad said was “for safety” (more like, “for financial reasons”). According to his mother, he tutored the homeless throughout high school. She later said, “He’s been painted as a devil. He’s not that. He’s never been that. He’s not perfect, but he is a loving, nurturing, gentle person.” His dad said, “He was like Mr. Perfect.”

By the end of high school, Scott was one of the top junior golfers in San Diego. He worked part-time at a country club in Rancho, Sante Fe, picking up golf balls and refuelling carts in exchange for lessons and time on the course. In 1990, Scott enrolled @ Arizona State University, where Mickelson was, which cast a shadow on Scott. Note: He ENROLLED, and did not get the scholarship that he wanted and was never on the official roster, according to Doug Tammaro, ASU’s Associate Sport’s Information Director- but his father and him were determined to have him play golf there, so that’s where he enrolled. Within semester, Scott was out of there: befriended the #1 junior in the country, Chris Couch. They went out drinking together and Scott was amped for a wild night out, which resulted in two giant hangovers the next day, causing Chris’s dad to report Scott to the golf coach, who kicked him off the team. He was transferred to Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo and then to California Polytechnic State University, where he planned to major in international business, but then switched to agricultural business. His gold coach said, “I don’t think I ever saw him get out of control”.

Mickelson went on to become one of the Top 50 golfers in the world for more than 25 years. Mickelson’s dad was an airline pilot and spent his free time teaching his son golf. He met Amy McBride in College at Arizona State University, where he was a star golfer and she was a cheerleader for the NBA’s Phoenix Suns.

At age 20, he told his parents that he was moving out and going to make it on his own. He moved into an apartment with his golf buddies and worked 3 jobs: 1 as a waiter at the Pacific café, and 2 at local golf courses. Scott’s teachers said that he came across as “more mature than most” and said that they wouldn’t have minded a class full of Scott Petersons.

When Scott met Laci in 1994, he told his parents that he hoped she would be the future Mrs. Peterson, and his friends confirmed that he was “gaga over her”. After dating for 2 years, the couple decided to move in together. Scott gave up his golfing career and decided to focus on business. When Scott was finishing his final year in college, Laci got a job in Prunedale and was the breadwinner for a while.

On August 9th, 1997 26-year-old Scott and 22-year-old Laci got married at Sycamore Mineral Springs resort in San Luis Obispo county’s Avila valley, where approximately 150 celebrated the occasion with them. He had at least 2 affairs shortly after, to which his parents said, “Such relationships are common, even among people who are happily married- and having an affair is a far cry from committing murder”. It was only after Scott met Laci that he learned that he had 2 siblings that had been given up for adoption almost a decade before he was born. He did not appear to be upset by the news, rather using the opportunity to get to find and get to know his half-siblings, and especially close to Anne- Scott and Laci attended her wedding, went on trips with her and her husband, and when Laci disappeared, Scott went to stay with Anne. She said that she has no doubt that he is guilty of murder and had sensed the tension between them in November 2002, just weeks before Laci vanished.

In June 1998, Scott graduated with a BSC in agricultural business. The couple decided that they wanted to open their own Sports Bar, so they transformed an old bakery into a bar/restaurant and called it “The Shack”. Neither of their parents offered to invest into their business, but Scott and Laci were determined to make their restaurant a success. Scott wanted to be like his dad and older brothers- they had all worked at his dad’s business during summer vacations and he wanted to be a business owner too. “He’s got the genes and the example, they said”. They served burgers, draft beers, and were known for their great beer-battered onion rings. Laci made sure that each table had peanuts, and she brought a lot of love, life, and special touches into the business.

In 2000, they sold “The Shack” at a profit, much to everyone’s surprise, and while they wanted to buy a house in San Luis Obispo, close to Morro Bay (where their parents lived), they could not afford to, instead buying a $177 000 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom bungalow house in East La Loma Park, Modesto. The house was what one might call a “fixer upper”, and the couple got to work retiling, painting, decorating, and landscaping their new home. Laci took a part-time job as a substitute teacher and Scott started working for Tradecorp USA, selling fertilizer, for a salary of $5000 per month (before taxes). He became the company’s West coast representative, selling fertilizer and irrigation units, earning a salary and commission. Laci was passionate about being the perfect housewife, perhaps striving to be like Martha Stewart, whose show they were watching on the morning before Laci went missing. While Scott had given up his professional golfing dream, he became the youngest member of Modesto’s Rotary Club and still enjoyed golf, making sure he made time for the golf course every week. The couple borrowed money to build a swimming pool in their back yard and hosted dinner parties. For 3 years, Scott and Laci tried to have a child, and in 2002, she fell pregnant. She enrolled in pre-natal yoga classes and they attended LaMaze classes together. When they learned that they were going to have a baby boy, they decorated a nursery in a nautical theme for him, and decided on the name Connor.

On November 20th, 2002, 30-year-old Scott met 27-year-old Amber Frey, a Fresno masseuse and single mom, through a mutual friend that he had met at a conference in October. Laci was 7 months pregnant- in 8 weeks or so, Scott would’ve been a dad. But he didn’t seem to care about that anymore: all he wanted as Amber and a care-free life with her. On his 2nd date with Amber, which included champagne and strawberries, he told her that he had been married before but that he had lost his wife and that this would be the first Christmas without her- and on the SAME DAY, he went to buy a boat that he had used to “go fishing” with the day that his wife had disappeared. He also told her that his job as a fertilizer saleman took him all over the world, from Cairo to Paris, and that he lived in a big house in Sacramento all by himself. He told her that he owned another property in San Diego and a Land Rover, but that he wanted to sell it because he didn’t have anyone to share it with. He said he really wanted to settle down but just hadn’t found the right person yet.

1 week before Christmas, Scott and Laci visited his parents. Scott and his dad went golfing and Laci and Jackie went Christmas shopping. On December 23rd, 2002 at 5.45 PM, they went to Amy, Laci’s sister’s hair salon, called Salon Salon, to get Scott’s monthly haircut. Scott generously offered to pick up a fruit basket that Amy had bought for her grandfather as a Christmas gift, saying that he was going to play golf the next day, so he could easily do this for her. Allegedly, Scott told a few people the same story, likely attempting to build his alibi’s as he premeditated the murder of his pregnant wife. Laci spoke with her mother on the phone that evening at approximately 8.30PM, which would sadly be the last time she ever heard from her daughter.

On December 24th, 2002, Scott said that he spent the morning with Laci and then decided to “go fishing” at the Berkeley Marina. He said that Laci was watching a cooking show, and told him that she was going to mop the floors, bake cookies, and take her dog, Mackenzie for a walk. At approximately 10.30 AM , a neighbor, Karen Servas, said that she found Mackenzie alone outside the home, so she returned her to the back yard. Another neighbor said that he had seen Mackenzie at approximately 10.45 AM when he was outside playing catch with his own dog. One neighbor said that she saw Mackenzie roaming the neighborhood with a muddy leash.

Scott said that when he returned home from fishing, he saw Laci’s car, a 1996 Land Rover Discovery, in the driveway and the door open- but said that there was no sign of her. He showered, ate pizza, drank milk, and washed his clothes “because they got wet from fishing”, and then called her mom, saying that Laci was MISSING. Laci’s stepdad, Ron Granstski, called the police to report her missing. When the police arrived at Laci and Scott’s home, they found her keys, wallet, sunglasses and purse in a closet, which they found odd. They noticed that the dining room had been set for a family Christmas dinner the following night, as well as a telephone book, which was suspiciously open on a page with an advert for a defense lawyer. That evening, Scott was questioned by detectives Jon Buehler and Allen Brocchini, the lead investigators on the case. He initially told them that he had gone golfing that day, but later told them that he had actually changed his plans to go fishing for sturgeon at the Berkeley Marina. On December 24th at 2.15 PM , Scott had eerily left a voice note on Laci’s phone, saying “Hey beautiful. It’s 2.15. I’m leaving Berkeley.” Detectives said that they were a little thrown off by his calm, cool demeanor and his lack of questioning, for example, most concerned partners of a missing person would ask questions like: “Will you call me back?” “Where are you going now?” “Can I come with you?” “Can I have one of your cards?” etc.

The search for Laci was extensive, including helicopters, searches on horseback, bicycles, and rafts, and there were also K9 units. In the first 2 days, almost 1000 people were out searching for Laci, making sure her flyer was put up everywhere as the reward money increased, eventually reaching $500 000. One of Laci’s friend’s husband launched a website lacipeterson.com , and the community held vigils and circulated banners, posters, and blue and yellow ribbons. When Scott was at the first vigil, he had told her that he was on a business trip in Europe, describing the scenery in detail.

On April 13th, dogwalkers found Connor’s decomposing (but well-preserved) remains in a marshy area of the San Francisco Bay short in Richmond’s Point Isabel Regional Shoreline park, north of Berkeley. His umbilical cord was still attached, appearing to have been torn. The autopsy results were sealed, but an anonymous Associated Press source revealed that one and a half loops of nylon tape were found around his neck and there was a significant cut on his body.

On April 14th, a walker discovered the body of a recently pregnant woman one mile away from where the baby’s body was discovered, and wearing beige pants and a maternity bra. She had been decapitated and her limbs were missing, and decomposition was so bad that her remains were almost unrecognizable. On April 18th, a coroner was able to confirm that the remains found belonged to Laci and Connor Peterson. Laci’s cause of death was never determined, but the autopsy revealed that she had 2 cracked ribs (not confirmed whether this happened before or after her murder), and that her internal organs were missing, except for her uterus, which likely helped to protect the fetus. Her cervix was still in tact. The cornoner, Dr. Peterson, concluded that the baby boy had died in utero, but later said that he could not confirm whether he had been born alive when he was initially expelled from her body.

Amber Frey had learned from a friend that Scott was married and that his wife was missing, which shocked her. She called the police on December 30th, 2002, to detail the nature of their relationship, and agreed to let police record her conversations with him.

Scott was put arrested on April 18th, 2003 near a La Jolla golf course, where he claimed he was meeting his father and brother for a round of golf. He had dyed his hair blonde, grew a goatee, and packed a Mercedes Benz bought in his mother’s name saying that it was to “avoid recognition from the press”. In it, he had camping gear, clothes, an axe, Viagra, $15000 in cash, 200 sleeping pills, 4 cellphones, his brother’s driver’s license, a dagger, a gun, and his brother’s passport.

On April 21st, 2003, he was charged with 2 counts of first-degree murder, which he pleaded NOT guilty to. Prosecutors determined that Scott Peterson had murdered Laci at their Modesto home, then dumped her body in the San Francisco Bay from his fishing boat on December 24th. In 2004, he was convicted for the murders of his wife, Laci, and their unborn son, Conner, and was sentenced to death, with Judge Delucchi saying that Laci’s murder was particularly "cruel, uncaring, heartless, and callous".

Besides his strange behavior and story inconsistencies, how did they catch him? They found 1 hair on a pair of plyers found on his boat, which matched Laci’s DNA. He arrived at San Quentin State Prison on March 17th, 2005, saying that he would get used to small quarters and that, in fact, San Quinten was a historic building, implying that he was lucky to be there. “I’ll get my things at Home Depot when I get out”, he said. He has always maintained his innocence and he continues to appeal his sentence.

On August 24th, 2020, his death sentenced was overturned in a 7-0 decision, but his conviction was upheld. On November 23rd, he was transported to the San Mateo County jail for resentencing. On September 22, 2021, California Superior Court Judge Anne-Christine Massullo scheduled Peterson to be re-sentenced that November to life in prison without the possibility of parole, and on December 8th, 2021, Scott was resentenced to life in prison without the possibility for parole for the first-degree murder of Laci Peterson and a concurrent sentence of 15 years to life for the second-degree murder of Conner. In court, Laci’s mother, Sharon, said: “You didn’t want the responsibility of being a father. You’re a coward. He would’ve been 18 years old by now. Ten months ago, you would have been free of child support and not have to worry about being responsible for a child. But 2 things will never change: Laci and Conner will always be dead, and you will always be their murderer.”

The death of Laci and Connor led to the creation of the “Unborn Victims of Violence Act”, which is also known as Laci and Connor’s law, which President George W. Bush signed into law in 2004. The Act provides that, under federal law, any person who causes death or injury to an unborn child while in the commission of a crime upon a pregnant woman will be charged with a separate offense.

Under California State law, criminals may not profit from insurance policies, but of course this did not stop Scott from trying to get Laci’s $250 000 life insurance policy paid out to him. On December 19th, 2005, this money was given to Laci’s mother, Sharon.

In 2006, Sharon wrote For Laci: A Mother's Story of Love, Loss, and Justice, a biography and memoir about Laci's life and death. All proceeds are used to fund the Laci and Conner Search and Rescue Fund, which she had founded. On January 29, 2006, it was listed at No. 1 on The New York Times Non-Fiction Best Seller list.

Laci's stepfather, Ron Grantski, died in his sleep at his Modesto home on April 8, 2018, at age 71, after a lengthy period of failing health. He was buried next to Laci and Conner.[9] Laci's father, Dennis Rocha, died December 9, 2018, at the age of 72.