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TAPED TRANSCRIPT OF MELINA CALABRESE

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY CORPORAL YURI MELICH

CASE NUMBER – 08-069208

OCTOBER 9, 2008

YM – CORPORAL YURI MELICH

MC – MS. MELINA CALABRESE

YM: The date right now is October 9, 2008, and the time right now is 1208 hours. I'm Detective Melich with the Orange County Sheriff's Office reference to Orange County case number 08-69208. Uh, we're located at, at the Orange County Sheriff's Office. Uh, we're in my office. I am with a Melina, is it Cabrese?

MC: It's Melina Calabrese.

YM: Sorry, Melina Calabrese.

MC: (Laughs.)

YM: And Melina, would you please state your name and your birthday for the record?

MC: Uh, Melina Calabrese. June 17, 1986.

YM: Uh, and you're aware this is being recorded?

MC: Yup (affirmative).

YM: Any objection?

MC: Nope (negative).

YM: Okay. We sat here, uh, I actually got your name from, uh, a couple of people who throughout this investigation—I have, uh, I guess, people were saying that you were one of Casey's closet friends, growing up. And, uh, I called you and asked you if you'd be willing to come down here and talk to me; to just kind of get an idea of what, what Casey is like, what she was like, and then help us out with the case. Uh, you agreed to come down. Uh, I've had the door open, I guess, for the past hour. Uh, we were just talking about what we're going to go over; and, seeing if there's anything you can help us with. I just closed it now so we could have privacy, but obviously you can get up, walk out any time.

MC: Right.

YM: Uh, I just want you to make sure you don't think you're trapped in here...

MC: (Laughs.)

YM: ...and you have to, you have to talk to me. Uhm, with that being said, we, we sat here and talked some time about, uhm, your relationship with Casey. And, I guess, I want to ask you briefly, starting from when you guys first started hanging out—you, you told me, you guys were best friends from like seventh grade, on and off, until recently. Tell me a little bit about how you started to become friends; and, what she was like in high school.

MC: Uhm, we met in seventh grade. We had the same English; and, I believe, math class, as well. Uh, we sat next to each other. And, we started talking about boys and our friendship began, I guess. It's a beautiful love story. And, uhm, through high school, we hung out. We had a good time. We were always known, uhm, to go out and be social with everybody. But, we never did anything crazy. Uhm, and we've just been friends, off and on, since then.

YM: Uh, you said something about, uh, having, like, a boy obsession or something in high school. Uh, what, what do you mean by boy obsession in high school? Uh...

MC: Oh, we bounced from boys, uh, having crushes on boys...

YM: Okay.

MC: ...uhm, a lot. We would talk about one boy in one class and the next boy in the next class. Uh, uh, as from what I feel is typical teenage years.

YM: Did, uh, did you guys ever party in high school, or go out to parties? How, what, what was that like?

MC: Uhm, our senior year, we went to a few parties. Uhm, we just hung out really. That was pretty much it. I didn't do a lot of partying. She, we just, if we were at the same party—we were there—that that was that--nothing crazy ever happened.

YM: Did she do more partying than you; as far as go to more parties, and stuff?

MC: Oh, no. Uh, well not that I went to a lot of parties. But, I don't think she would—went to many parties at all.

YM: What about drinking and smoking; or, using drugs at these parties?

MC: Never once, uh, in high school did we ever. Uh, I mean, if she, if she did then that was her. But I never; uh, together, we never did, no.

YM: Okay. Do you know of her using it; or, did she ever tell you—hey, I experimented; or, hey, tried this; I liked it; or, hey, tried this, I didn't like it. Anything like that?

MC: No. She was very adamantly against cigarettes and pot.

YM: Uhm, up until, I guess, you guys, uh, you graduated high school back in 2004.

MC: Uh-hum (affirmative).

YM: And, you spent the summer together, on and off; st...still maintaining your friendship; and, that you told me that you, I guess, when you started going to school, you still saw her, but not as frequently. Is that correct?

MC: Uhm, yeah (affirmative), for, we saw each other a couple times the summer we graduated; and, then, probably, for the next year, it was just randomly talking via phone or internet, whatnot.

YM: And, while you were going to high school, around this time, did you work at Universal Studios?

MC: Yes.

YM: And did she work at Universal Studios with you?

MC: Yes.

YM: And when did you leave Universal Studios?

MC: Uhm, I went from fulltime to seasonal in January of 2006.

YM: Okay. And she worked there just a little bit...

MC: Aft...

YM:...longer, after you, but you don't know what happened after that?

MC: Correct.

YM: Okay. Uhm, you said that, also, you first met Caylee, when?

MC: About six weeks after she was born.

YM: And had Casey ever told you that she was pregnant?

MC: No.

YM: And what, well, how did you learn that she actually had a kid?

MC: When I saw pictures on My Space of her holding her baby. (chuckles).

YM: Okay. Well, then you, did you reach out to her and...

MC: Uhm, yes. I wrote her and said congratulations. And from then on, we decided to meet up for lunch.

YM: What'd she tell you about the baby's father, at first?

MC: That it was Jesse Grund and that they had been dating off and on for a year or maybe, yeah (affirmative), it was about a year or so.

YM: And did that story change later—on who the father was?

MC: Yes. It...

YM: And what did she tell you?

MC: Uhm, it was shortly after her and Jesse broke up in May of 2006. Uhm, and she explained to me that it had been, uhm, a gentleman named, Josh.

YM: And did she say where Josh was from; or, how she met Josh, or what happened?

MC: Uhm, the story that she gave me was that she met him at Universal. He was basically a one night stand; and, he was from Georgia.

YM: Did she ever mention what his last name was?

MC: Never.

YM: She just...

MC: No, no. Go ahead.

YM: Uhm, did she ever say, like, where this one night stand took place? Was it at his place, her place, hotel...

MC: It was at Universal...

YM: ...a park?

MC: ...hotel. That's all I know.

YM: Did, uhm, she ever add anything about Josh, uh, what happened to Josh? Well, back up. Did she say if Josh was going to be a part of Caylee's life; or, what was the agreement? Or, what did she tell you?

MC: Uhm, she told me that she wasn't going to tell Caylee, herself, about Josh until Caylee started asking her own questions. That was her plan. And, her and Josh spoke randomly—here and there, at first.

YM: Okay. What, what else did she tell you about Josh, uh, as far as did he have a family—wife, kids, anything like that?

MC: Uhm, she did mention that he had a girlfriend who he was planning on marrying. They had children together already. Uhm, that was probably the extent of anything else I knew about Josh.

YM: Did she tell you how old he was?

MC: Actually, no.

YM: Did she describe him to you?

MC: Nope (negative). She said he was really hot.

YM: And, did she say, uh, what happened to Josh?

MC: Uhm, Josh passed away in a car accident shortly after Caylee's second birthday.

YM: And that would have been 2007. And, did she say where, uh, where the accident was; or, any details about the accident?

MC: It was somewhere in, in Georgia, where he was from.

YM: She ever, uh, show you an obituary, or ever show you a picture of Josh, or did she have anything to say—hey, this is Josh?

MC: She didn't. If she did, I never saw it.

YM: Okay. Did, from, I guess, you guys, ever, ever since she was six, Caylee was six weeks old, you guys still maintained the—a friendship, on again, off again, best friends, friends, separated. And, you told me that one of the reasons that you guys were kind of separated; was, because, she would tell lies, or, or big lies and that would kind of upset you. Is that right? Is that right?

MC: Yeah (affirmative), well...

YM: And, uh, you gave me an example about, uh, I guess, a lie about Jesse. And which one was that?

MC: Uhm, sh...or her, she went with Jesse being the father for the first probably eight months. Yeah (affirmative); I guess, about eight months of Caylee's life. And they broke up; and, then, I guess, she just felt she needed to tell me that he wasn't the father.

YM: She only told you this after they broke up.

MC: Right.

YM: But she knew before they broke up?

MC: Oh, yeah (affirmative). They had done the paternity test and everything, right after Caylee was born.

YM: She give you any reason for why she lied about that to you, to you—I guess one of her best friends, at the time?

MC: Uhm, she just w...wanted to, in so many words, it was, I think; I think she was just trying to maintain, you know. And then she was worried that people were going to judge her for being such a young mother.

YM: Uh-hum (affirmative).

MC: I think she just wanted to, like, look like she was in a stable relationship, which is, uh, understandable.

YM: You, uhm, you also said something about her lying when things, when things got tough. Give me an example of, of, uh, what do you mean by that?

MC:: Uhm, oh, gosh, I can't even think of any right now. Uhm, she just, you know, uh, things would get—I think she would just start lying about where she was, and what she was doing, and I don't know why. You know, maybe, it felt like she needed to just put on a good show for people. I don't know what it was that she, what made her do it.

YM: You mentioned a good show of—before we got on tape, you said something about her. Like if, you said, uh, you were dating your boyfriend, and you and your boyfriend would go out to dinner—a couple of days later, she would come back and go—oh, me and my boyfriend are going to do this. And, we kind of determined she had a, a certain type of competitive nature. Is that correct?

MC: Oh...

YM: Or...

MC: ...she had a slight one, when it came to that kind of stuff; yeah (affirmative), sure, I would use that word.

YM: Like she would want to one up you?

MC: Uhm, yeah (affirmative), I guess that would be a good way to put it.

YM: Uhm, you said something about putting bits of truth to make a lie. Uh, we, well, we talked about that. You, you said something along the lines of this—she would put bits of truth together to, to make up a story; and, then she would start believing her own story. Do you have any examples, or something that kind of sticks out about that?

MC: I think...

YM: Or maybe about...

MC:...things like Sports Authority, when she said she worked at Sports Authority. I mean, she would just go with it—saying, you know, she was working late. She was working early. She was doing this, this or that, with it. And I think she just, you know, started telling so many people so many times—uh, I, it was almost as if she believed it.

YM: Did you or any, anyone else—I guess Lauren Gibbs was also a good friend of hers, at the time; and, and babysat Caylee—that you said something about Lauren Gibbs actually calling Sports Authority.

MC: Right.

YM: And, uh, and what did they tell her about Casey?

MC: Uhm, they had never even heard of her, let alone hired her.

YM: Uh, did, were you present when Lauren confronted Casey about this; or, did, did she tell you about what happened afterwards?

MC: Uhm, Lauren called me right after she called Sports Authority to tell me. And, I'm not one hundred percent sure; but, I believe she was babysitting Caylee, at the time, when she did this. I think that's what it was. She called to speak to Casey; and, they said that they didn't even know who Casey was, let alone that she worked there. So she called me and I, I just told her, I'm like, you need to tell her, straight up, you've already called the job, and you need to confront her about it and see what she tells you.

YM: And did she?

MC: She stuck to it that she worked at Sports Authority.

YM: Even after Lauren says, I called the...

MC: Uh-hum (affirmative).

YM: Did she give any explanation as to why they, they said that she didn't work there?

MC: Did they give an, I'm sorry, can you say that question again?

YM: Did, did Sports Authority ever give any ex...or, uh, Lauren calls Casey and confronts her; hey, I called Sports Authority; and, they're saying you don't work there. Did Casey ever say, well, no, that's, that's not true? You know...

MC: Yes.

YM: ...did she give any ex...explanation as to why Sports Authority would say that?

MC: Uhm, no. She, she said she had an i...uhm, no, she just, never. I mean, she said, she had the i.d. (identification). She, she said, I think, uhm, uh, maybe, I don't know. She said that because she was, uhm, didn't have a home Sports Authority—that they maybe didn't know her...

YM: Did, uhm, did Lauren...

MC: ...either.

YM: As far as babysitting Caylee, was that kind of what separated—what kept Lauren from babysitting Caylee anymore? Was it because of Casey going and doing her own thing, as opposed to actually working?

MC: Right.

YM: Uhm, you, you mentioned the last time you actually saw Casey; or, that you believe you saw Casey, was this year at her birthday, right? That was in March?

MC: Yup (affirmative).

YM: And she was supposed to show up at your birthday, back on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, and she never showed?

MC: Correct.

YM: Did she ever, I mean, you said she communicated with you; or, what, what did she tell you about why she didn't show up for your birthday?

MC: I'm not one hundred percent positive. I think it was on the lines of some, it was being a hectic, some hectic time for her, right now; and, she just didn't have time to make it.

YM: Did she apologize, at least?

MC: Oh, yeah (affirmative).

YM: Did she ever get you a birthday present afterwards, or, or...

MC: Huh-huh (negative).

YM: ..send you a card or anything?

MC: No.

YM: Uhm, from that, June 17<sup>th</sup> to the day she was arrested; and, this whole thing blew up on the news—have, have you guys communicated at all through Instant Message, or My Space, or AIM, or anything.

MC: Uh, just random comments on My Space. That was pretty much it. Uhm, maybe a conversation or two on Instant Message. But I...

YM: What were the conversations about (inaudible).

MC: I don't, nothing...

YM: Just general...

MC: Yeah (affirmative), just how's it going? How are things? Uh...

YM: Did you actually go out with her anywhere?

MC: Uhm, I think there was one time, in between, that she wanted me to go to Fusion. And, I actually was going to go; and, then I decided, at the last minute, not to go.

YM: She ever make any mention that something was, something was wrong; or, did you get, get the impression that—hey, are you okay, Casey? Did you ever...

MC: Nope (negative). I never thought to ask her. I never..

YM: She...

MC: ...there was no indication that I needed to ask her. It just was...

YM: She ever...

MC: ...almost like life was normal.

YM: Did she ever mention her child was missing?

MC: No, (sigh)

YM: Uhm, uh, during that time frame, do you remember any, any of her friends mentioning to you that Casey told them that Caylee was missing?

MC: Never.

YM: So your group of friends that you know of—nobody had any idea that, that Caylee was missing?

MC: No.

YM: And Casey's doing, uh, whatever?

MC: No.

YM: The morning of the, the 16<sup>th</sup>, before she was arrested—you said that she reached out to you. Now tell me about that.

MC: Uhm, I woke up that morning; and, I'm addicted to My Space. So, I went straight to My Space when I woke up. And Casey's, uhm, you can change how you feel and all that kind of stuff. It said that Caylee was missing. If you have any information, she put her cell phone number on there.

YM: UH-hum (affirmative).

MC: And right away, Casey was on line, Casey was on line—so, I wrote her an Instant Message; and, I asked her what was going on; and, if this was, like, a serious thing, or. And she explained to me, that this is, you know—she told me about how she left Caylee with a sitter. She waited around for a couple

hours. The next thing you know, it's been a few weeks. And she, that was the ex...uhm—I was, I just sat there for a second; and, uhm, that was pretty much the extent of our conversation.

YM: You mentioned that she mentioned the sitter that morning. Had she mentioned the name Zenaida, or Zanny, to you before that morning?

MC: Never.

YM: Uh, what about a sitter in general before that morning?

MC: Uhm, she mentioned, I guess it had to be around the beginning of the year. Ran...you know, I heard a couple, maybe, I heard her, like, twice—that Caylee was with the sitter. I never heard it as a nanny. I never heard it as Zenaida or whatever else they—the nicknames or, I just, all I heard was a sitter. And it was during normal work time, so I never thought anything of it.

YM: Did, uhm, uh, as far as sitters are concerned, as far as you know, who would watch over Caylee though—aside from Lauren Gibbs and, and her mom, Cindy? Uh, any other of her friends that would watch over Caylee?

MC: Uhm...

YM: That you know of.

MC: Those are the only two that stick out in my head.

YM: Do you know a, a Juliet Lewis?

MC: Never heard of her.

YM: No one from high school? It doesn't, it doesn't ring a bell? What about a Jeff Hopkins?

MC: I do know Jeff.

YM: Is it the Jeff from high school? You guys went to high school together?

MC: Yes.

YM: Do you know if Jeff has a child?

MC: I have never heard of that, ever.

YM: Do you know if, if Jeff and Casey were ever really close?

MC: Uhm, I know they were—I don't know if close was the right term. I know they hung out a few times.

YM: Do you think, uh, would, was Jeff ever closer to Casey, then you were? I'm not saying physically...

MC: I can only speak of...

YM: ...close. I'm just saying...

MC: No, no, no, I understand. Uhm, I can only, I don't, I would say, no.

YM: Okay. So, if, if she had something she wanted to confide in—you...

MC: I would think...

YM: ...(unintelligible).

MC: ...she would come to me before Jeff, yes.

YM: Had, had she ever confided in you anything about, uh, her relationship with her, her brother, Lee, or her father, George? Anything negative about the relationship between them?

MC: I never heard a negative thing about Lee between her, with, from Casey. Uhm, I know she wasn't the biggest fan of her father.

YM: Okay. And she give a reason why?

MC: She just, they didn't see eye-to-eye in a lot. Again, it was almost like a, it just, they just didn't see eye-to-eye on a lot of things.

YM: What about her relationship with her mom? Uhm, from high school to current; uh, how—did it get worse, did it get strained? Uh, how would you describe it?

MC: During high school, I believe, I would say—is your typical mother/daughter relationship. You know, we thought our moms were too strict; and, didn't give us enough leniency and freedom. Uhm, after high school, uhm, I really didn't hear much about her mom, until after Caylee. And, after Caylee, it was—there were a few times where she felt her mother was being incredibly ta, uh, I'm not quite sure what the right word would be—but they did have, there was strain in, in their relationship, when it came.

YM: Could it be controlling or bossy?

MC: Overbearing almost pops into my head. Casey had felt like—I almost think Casey felt like it was her daughter; and, she could choose how it was that she wanted to raise her and discipline her and...

YM: Cindy felt like it was her daughter, her mom?

MC: Cindy felt like there were times that Casey wasn't doing motherly, uhm, a proper mother...

YM: Such as what? Give me an example. Give me an example of...

MC: I, I, I honestly don't have a—I don't have any examples. I just remember Casey being upset that, I think, it just came, you know, when Cas...uh, Ca...I know of their fights where Casey would want to go out; and, either, uhm, Cindy wouldn't let her take Casey, or Caylee, out with her; or, you know, she

would only watch Caylee for so long—which, it can be understandable in some terms. I think Casey just doesn't like being told what to do (laughs).

YM: Did her mother ever make mention about being a better mother; or, that she, she's a better mother to Caylee than Casey is?

MC: Uhm, I don't know if those are the right words; but, uhm, there were a couple, she implied, that she was, can do a better job at it, I guess.

YM: That uh...

MC: She just...

YM: ...Cindy could? Mom, Grandma could?

MC: Yeah (affirmative).

YM: Did she ever, uhm, tell Casey that she should be spending more time with Caylee at home as opposed to going out all the time?

MC: Uhm, I never heard that myself; but, I heard from Casey that, that Cindy had im...had said that she should be staying, spending more time at home with, uhm, occupying herself with her daughter rather than.

YM: Casey ever tell you that, uh, her mom put her hands on her; or, that her mom, you know, got, got physical with her because Casey may not have been listening; or, uh, uh, you know how it is, when you grow up—if you turn away, maybe grab, your parents will grab you by the arm, and spin you around? Did she ever say anything about physical, uhm, uh, her mom getting physical with her?

MC: Uhm, no. I think the extent that I ever heard was that they got in some pretty extreme arguments.

YM: (Inaudible)...

MC: But I nev...I don't think I ever, I don't remember—I don't remember ever hearing.

YM: And the extreme arguments would be over...?

MC: Usually over Caylee; or, yeah (affirmative), usually over Caylee.

YM: Uhm, did she specifically tell you, or do you, do you remember her telling you about any arguments that, uh, they would have just before Caylee went missing?

MC: Huh-huh (negative). We weren't that close, right then.

YM: Uh, what did she tell you about her last job? Uhm, this is actually what led us to the, to the conversation about lying before. She said that she was working as, uh...

MC: Oh, she was working at an event company somewhere in downtown. She gave me the name of it. Honestly, I couldn't even re...tell you.

YM: Was it Event Image Solutions or something like that?

MC: No.

YM: Or Event Imaging?

MC: No. I think that, no. That sounds like something she did at Universal with the photography and stuff there.

YM: Alright, okay.

MC: But, uhm, no, I...

YM: What'd she tell you about, well, what was she doing for them?

MC: At Universal?

YM: No, no, no, for this uh...

MC: Oh, at the event company?

YM: ...event company.

MC: She had just started. Uhm, she, it was downtown. She had her own office. I was so jealous (laughs).

YM: When she said—just started—when, when was this? When did she say she just started?

MC: Uhm, it had to be, I want to say it was right before her birthday. So, closer to the beginning of the year. February or March?

YM: Uh-hum (affirmative). And why'd you say you were jealous?

MC: Because it was everything I wanted (laughs).

YM: Is that what you're going to school for now...

MC: Yes...

YM: ...is to be an event coordinator?

MC: ...to be an event, yeah (affirmative). And she wasn't in school, and she'd gotten the job that I wanted. Even if it was just beginning. I, I remember it was, it was, it was entry level job. Uhm, but that was how she got...

YM: (Inaudible).

MC: Her story for me was, that's how she started at Fusion, the Fusion gigs.

YM: Was through this company? And that's what, uh...

MC: They were sending her out there to help promote it. And, then she would go out there. Which is typical for an event coordinator...you know, event planner. Especially when you're first going in...

YM: Uh-hum (affirmative).

MC: ...to your job to market as, uhm, such as that.

YM: You mentioned, uh, you mentioned Fusion. And, obviously, with the ton of pictures out there for Fusion, you made a comment about the pictures, saying it was just not her.

MC: Right.

YM: Tell me about that. Well, why isn't...

MC: Uhm, you know, Casey and I have had plenty of good times since high school. And, you know, even in high school, and since high school, neither of us were really the club, going out; at least, as frequent as what her pictures appeared to be, like.

YM: Uh-hum (affirmative).

MC: You know, we went out every once in a while. You know, big deal. It seemed like those pictures were just coming out, all the time.

YM: What about her actions on the pictures?

MC: And that...

YM: Was that...

MC: Just, you know, we have cute pictures; but, I, I would look at my pictures and then I would look at those pictures; and, I just didn't feel like the Casey that I knew. Basically, didn't look like the Casey I knew. It just looked, I don't know. She was trying too hard to be someone she was not.

YM: Did her, like, her grind—there's, there's, obviously, pictures of her up there on the stage wearing a blue dress, grinding with another girl. Was that normal, the Casey that you knew?

MC: Casey, uh, yeah (affirmative). I mean, that's not.

YM: I'm not saying it's good or bad...

MC: Uh, yeah (affirmative).

YM: I'm just saying, is that, is that...

MC: I'm just trying to figure out how to. That, that's, I don't know; that, those pictures were, again, those were seeming—those seem like she was trying too hard to, you know, smile for this camera, and do these poses. I'm not saying that I never seen her do that elsewhere; but, I don't know. I just, something about those pictures is just not sitting with me right. And that...

YM: Uh, that's fair enough. Fair enough. Did, uhm, did she ever mention, uh, I brought this up before. Growing up, there's always quest...it's always, you know, curiosity on, on what stuff that gets you high. You know, if you go out there and you pick 'schrooms; or, you you, you sniff glue; or, there's certain chemicals around the household, that you can sniff. Have, had you ever had a conversation with; or, been in a conversation with her; or, with her friends, about chloroform? Uh...

MC: Never.

YM: When was the first time you heard about that?

MC: When this came, when they mentioned that with this case—I went to my mom, and asked her about it; because, I really had no idea anything about it, for any sort of purpose. You know, even for what it's meant to do. I just really had, honestly, never heard of it. And, uhm, I definitely had never heard of it for recreational purposes; or, or, for whatever.

YM: Had, uhm, and describe her relationship, well, with, with guys recently. You, you mentioned that she was, she had a certain (sighs), attitude, I guess, uh, when it came to dating. Well, well, how would you describe that?

MC: I guess, this past year, she was—she would try and do more relationships than just dating. You know, she, she was all, you know, she tried again with Jesse. She met that Ricardo guy. And, she met this Tony guy. And, then I, you know, I heard about her and, you know, you know, being interested in this guy and being interested in that guy. Casey liked; almost, it was like a game for her, I think. You know, and, uh, uh, we used to do—it was kind of fun in high school. You would, you know, like a guy and then you would get his attention and hang out for a little bit. And, then you'd get bored and go to the next one. But, she just, she's kept doing it since then. Which is fine. You know, we're that, we're at that age, you should be able to date and do whatnot. It just, it, I almost think that was her attitude towards it. It was that she would hang out with a guy long enough that would keep her attention; and, and then, she'd want a new challenge.

YM: Uh-hum (affirmative).

MC: And she liked that.

YM: You ever had any problems—or, or, either before, either while you, while you guys were friends from seventh grade on, uh, or after, uhm; or, actually, up until today, after she got arrested, and maybe talking with her friends—any, any problems with, with her stealing; or, any hindsight—like, wow, you know, I never suspected her of taking anything. Uh, you know, I lost a, you know, I lost something, sometime back; but, now that this has come up, she was at the house. Anything like that ever come up, about her stealing, anything about theft?

MC: I never once had a problem with her. I mean, and she's been at my house plenty of times. I've hung out with her plenty of times. I've never noticed anything missing, or money missing, or me borrow, you know, lending her money. No, nothing like that. And I've never heard. I mean, honestly, the first time I've heard about that, again, was when this case became public.

YM: Did, uhm, prior to coming over here, you said you had a conversation; or, you, you've been in contact with Lee, obviously, since this whole thing. He's been reaching out to friends and such. Uh, you said you probably talked to him about once a week or so; and, and, just to see how he's doing. You, you've helped distribute fliers, and then helped with the family. You've never gone to see Casey; but, you have talked to Lee, and, was it Cindy?

MC: I've talked to both Cindy and George. Uhm, but both of those were more closer to when this all first started happening. Uhm, and the flier distribution; and, it was Annie and I's idea. And, not that it wouldn't have happened to be anyways; but, Annie and I did start the involvement with the fliers. And, Cindy was very, very thankful for it. And, that was, I've maybe spoken to her once, since then. George, I've seen, I've only spoken to once period. Uhm, and that...

YM: Have they said anything to you about, uh, what happened to Caylee? Have they told you—hey, you know, Caylee's been taken by someone; or, hey, we got people following these—uh, have, have they given...

MC: Nope.

YM: ...said anything about that?

MC: No.

YM: What about Lee? Has he said anything about, you know, what Casey might have told him—where Caylee is?

MC: No. I had, we definitely never heard anything about any indication of where.

YM: What did Lee, what did the, what did Lee say when you said you were going to come and talk to me today?

MC: He just told me, good luck with everything. I was nervous.

YM: Okay. Uhm, we talked about the conversation, I guess, the first phone call that she made out of jail, uh, when she got arrested back on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July. And I asked you what your—your opinion of it. Because, I don't know her, so I don't know...

MC: Right.

YM: ...you know, what her typical reaction would be. Uh, just tell me about what, again, when you first heard it, you heard it on the news, right? And, you heard that, uh, I guess, you heard that she was

arrested on the news; and, you heard the phone call, uh, on TV. What, what, you said, you got upset, you almost punched the television. Why was that?

MC: It was, I can't imagine the last, can't remember the last time I was so angry. You know, it just wasn't, it's not, it's not Casey. That's not the Casey I know. That's not the Casey; and, I, I just couldn't understand how she was so rude; and, and so, uh, it just, it doesn't, it doesn't remind, it doesn't—I don't know, it just didn't sit well with me; and, it really upset me that that was her con...way of talking to her parents and her brother and, whoever, the, the girl was. Uhm, and then, to ask for Tony's phone number—I just didn't think that was, should have been her number one priority, especially during whatever may have been going on.

YM: Did you get up...did you get upset because she hadn't reached out to you if she had a problem? You, you'd think, hey, why, why, why didn't she reach out to her friends about this?

MC: Uhm, yeah (affirmative). I mean, I wasn't upset. I mean, the first time I heard Casey was, or Caylee was missing, I'd also heard that it was five weeks. So, the, the first thing that went through my head wasn't, oh, my gosh, why didn't she call me? It was—on, my gosh, why didn't you call anybody? Five weeks? I mean, I'm one of your best friends. Sure, you could have called me. But, I mean, you've got your parents. You've got, I mean, you have the cops. You have your brother. You have all these things. I just, and to this day, I still can't comprehend why she didn't call anybody. That...

YM: Did you...

MC: ...that doesn't sound like Casey to me, at all.

YM: She made, she made comments that she was actually looking for Caylee during this month. Did, do you, do you actually think that she was looking for Caylee while going to Fusion, or...

MC: My heart hopes that she was somehow looking for her. Uhm, all the facts point to the fact that she wasn't, but.

YM: Well, you know Casey. And, just based on what you know of her; and, and her actions, is that the Casey that would have been looking for her daughter?

MC: That's hard for me to say, because, I keep thinking about what I would have done. And, and...

YM: Well, well what would you have done?

MC: I would not have slept the first night I knew my daughter was missing. I would have called the cops immediately. I would have definitely been on the phone with some family member. And, you know, even if, if, even if things were tough with her family at that time, for whatever reason, I would have definitely been on the phone with a girlfriend, somebody. I mean, there are plenty of people out there who love her and Caylee. Somebody is going to help her; or, or, at least, guided her to do the right thing, which would have been involve the police.

YM: Is, uhm, is there anything else about, well, is there anything else about Ca...well, let me, let me back up. Casey's relationship with Caylee from the time that you remember—how, how would you describe that mother/daughter relationship?

MC: I, uh, I hoped for it to be mine. She and Caylee were adorable. I mean, they would call me on the phone and they would sing songs to me. She was, for being, you know, a nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, uh, mother, she, she, I, I just, I I'm you know, I didn't envy it, because, obviously, I'm not a mother. But, I just, I, I almost hoped for it, you know, because, she was very good with Caylee. She gave Caylee almost everything that a little girl could need or want. She was very good with her when it, you know, when Caylee did get upset, randomly. Uh, you know, Casey was very good with her. Just never raised her voice. Always, you know, and I never once ever saw her touch her in a, in a, in a negatory (sic) way. It, it's, you know, and to this day I, I, I hope my mother/daughter bond is going to be like that. And, it almost seemed easy.

YM: Hmm.

MC: Just easygoing, relaxed. Nothing too crazy. We always had a good time.

YM: Is there any, uh, special place that she liked taking Caylee?

MC: We, well they went to Target a lot, and Chick-Fil-A.

YM: What about a park? Any, any place where she liked to go out and play?

MC: No. She had everything in her backyard she wanted (laughs). Uhm, I never, I can't remember if they ever, uh, mentioned a certain park they used to go to. Uhm, maybe Blanchard Park once. I, I do recall that once. Uhm, but I don't re...not even a theme park or anything comes to mind.

YM: Do you believe that Zanny, this, uh, nanny exists; or, do you think, uh, it's her way of saying, you know, she was just leaving Caylee with someone here; and, then someone here; and, someone here?

MC: That's such a sketchy situation. Uhm...

YM: Knowing her and having...

MC: Knowing her...

YM: ...having grown up several years with her and then, and this, and knowing what you know now.

MC: Uh, I could see her having a sitter for, for Caylee. Uhm, I, it's weird to say what I think she would do, and wouldn't do, because everything I think, that I thought, that Casey would do—she's, uh, obviously, didn't do, uh. Uhm, I can see her having a sitter. I don't know how, I guess she was having to steal from people. I don't know how she was paying a sitter. But, uhm, as far as the Zenaida Gonzalez, I have never heard of her. I don't know if she exists, hmm.

YM: The, since, since she was arrested, did you have conversations with—did Cindy and George, or even Lee, open up to you and say how bad she's been stealing from the family for the past...

MC: I've never discussed the, the money issue at all.

YM: So they never mentioned that to you, saying that...

MC: Huh-huh (negative).

YM: ...she had a problem, or, uh, she had some issues and anything like that?

MC: Nope (negative). The only thing concerning the money that I have ever heard is when Amy did her—and answered questions. I think it was on some police report, I might have read...

YM: Uh-hum (affirmative).

MC: ...or whatnot. That's the only, the only thing I've ever heard about her stealing.

YM: Okay. Is, is there anything else about Casey, or, or, Caylee, that you know of, that I haven't asked you about, that you feel is important, that you wanted to tell me?

MC: No. I think we've done most of it...

YM: Okay.

MC: (Inaudible.)

YM: Uhm, you have my card. It's got my e-mail address on it. It's got my telephone number on it. And, obviously, if anything comes up, feel free to give me a call. Would you raise your right hand for me? Do you swear and affirm, everything you just told me is the truth?

MC: I swear.

**End of recorded statement.**

**This transcript has been reviewed for accuracy.**

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**CORPORAL YURI MELICH, OCSO DEPUTY SHERIFF**