





SAN DIEGO SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

ZAHAU CASE REVIEW



An aerial photograph of a large, multi-building estate. The main house is a large, white, two-story building with a prominent red-tiled roof and a central chimney. It is surrounded by a lush green lawn and several tall palm trees. To the right, there are smaller buildings, including a caretaker's quarters and a guest house, also featuring red-tiled roofs. A swimming pool is visible in the lower right corner, and a paved driveway with a white car is located near the top right. The overall scene is bright and sunny, with clear shadows cast by the buildings and trees.

Main House

**Caretaker's
Quarters**

Guest House

Involved Parties

- Rebecca Zahau
- Jonah Shacknai
 - ◆ Rebecca's boyfriend
- Maxfield (Max) Shacknai
 - ◆ Jonah and Dina's son
- Dina Shacknai
 - ◆ Jonah's ex-wife/Max's mother
- Adam Shacknai
 - ◆ Jonah's brother
- Neil Nalepa
 - ◆ Rebecca's ex-husband
- Nina Romano
 - ◆ Dina's twin sister



SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- July 11, 2011, Max Shacknai was injured as a result of falling over a second floor stair banister at 1043 Ocean Blvd. (Coronado PD case)
- July 13, 2011, Coronado Police request Sheriff's assistance with the investigation of Rebecca Zahau's death at 1043 Ocean Blvd.
- July 16, 2011, Max Shacknai died as a result of his injuries.



SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- August 31, 2011, Homicide Detectives and Medical Examiner Dr. Lucas discussed case findings with the Zahau family in Missouri.
- September 2, 2011, Rebecca Zahau's autopsy results released, death ruled a suicide.
- April 4, 2018, Civil Jury finds Adam Shacknai liable for Rebecca Zahau's death.
- April 16, 2018, Sheriff Gore directs team to conduct fresh review of case.
- November 30, 2018, case review concludes.



LATEX GLOVE





CRY FOR HELP

- Witness provides statement that teens were heard talking on the sidewalk in front of residence, near the Spreckles Mansion. One voice said “help, help.”
- Video deposition from same elderly witness at civil trial - indicated cries of “help me, help me” came from “up on the porch of the Spreckles Mansion.”



WOMAN SEEN AT MANSION

- California Department of Justice Special Agent Victor Resendez interviewed Nina Romano who admittedly was at mansion.
- Nina's text message to Rebecca corroborates her statement.



UNDERWEAR





GARDEN GLOVES



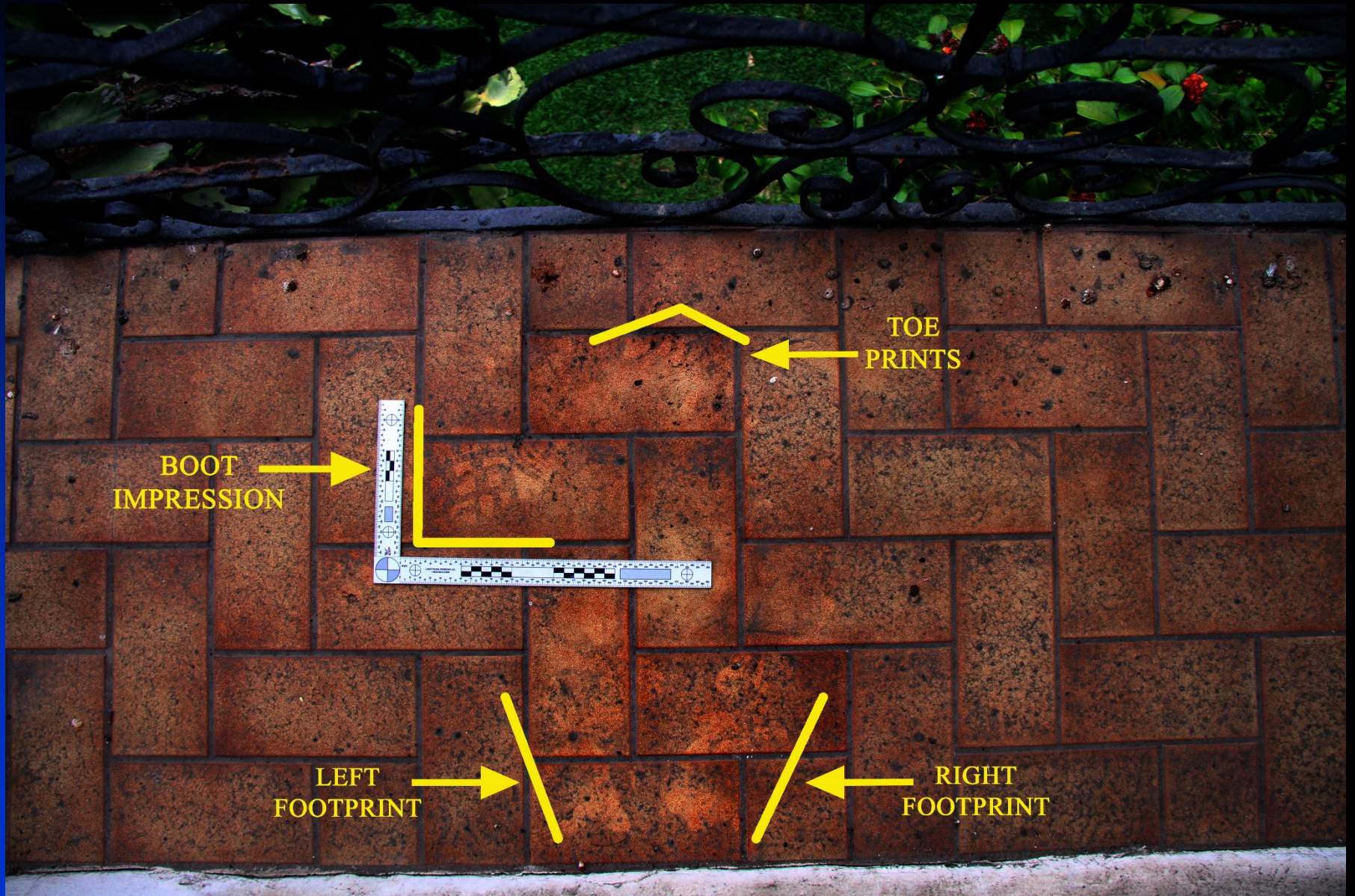


BALCONY DOORS





BALCONY



BOOT
IMPRESSION

TOE
PRINTS

LEFT
FOOTPRINT

RIGHT
FOOTPRINT



BALCONY RAILING





OUTDOOR SCENE





FOREHEAD INJURIES



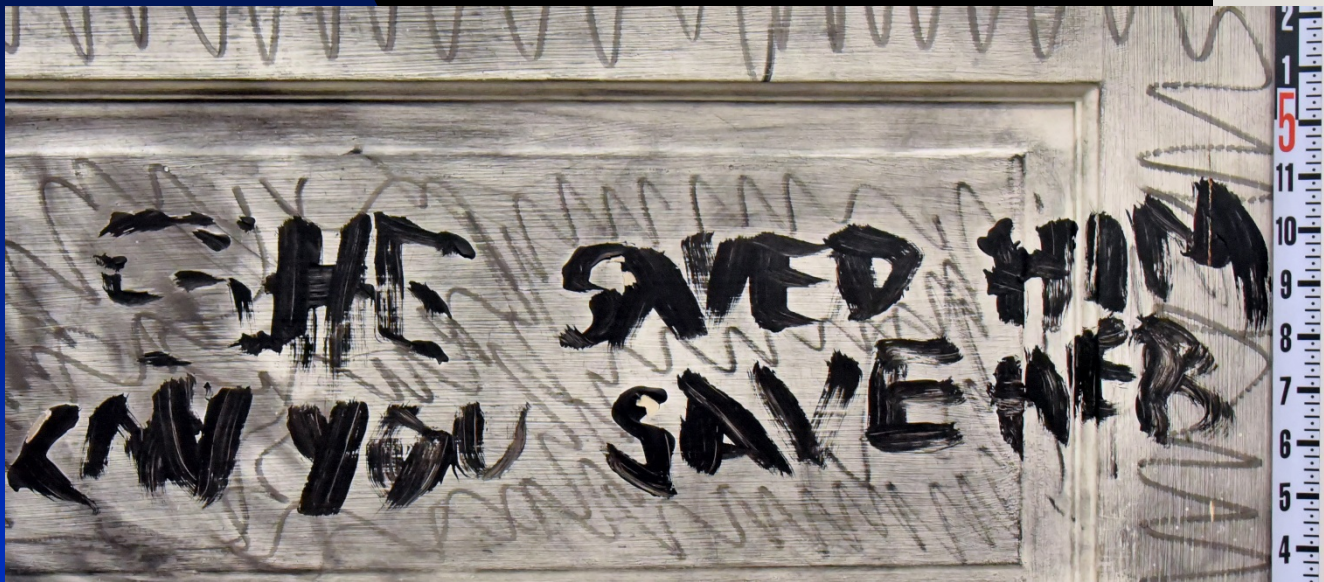


MESSAGE ON DOOR





MESSAGE ON DOOR





BEDROOM





FINGERPRINT ORIENTATION





THE ROPE





ROPE VIDEO





THE ROPE





STATE OF MIND

- " m I just too much of a coward to face the truth that I m settling for the hope of a few happy years??? Which may never even come??? Am I pretending that I will be content without ever having a child????"
- " it is my own fault...i have allowed myself to be completely cut off from my own life...my life does not exist..."



STATE OF MIND

- “These will never come true as long as I m w him...is this my curse for leaving neil.”
- “being talked to like I m a worthless person by kids who are spoilt.”
- “no amount of money is worth what I am going though.”
- “if I am not thinking I am crying.”



CIVIL CASE

Burden of Proof

- “Preponderance of the evidence” means evidence that has more convincing force than that opposed to it.
- If the evidence is so evenly balanced that you are unable to say that the evidence on either side of an issue preponderates, your finding on that issue must be against the party who had the burden of proving it.



CRIMINAL CASE

Burden of Proof

- Proof beyond a “reasonable doubt” is proof that leaves one with an abiding conviction that the charge is true.
- The evidence must prove the defendant is guilty. However the evidence need not eliminate all possible doubt, because everything in life is open to some possible or imaginary doubt.



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QUESTIONS