



Domestic and International Financial Investigations

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Transcript
Sworn Statement
Of
Deborah Johnson
Prepared By
Bill E. Branscum

Key

INV. BILL BRANSCUM – Bill E. Branscum, Investigator, Oracle International

DEBORAH JOHNSON -- Fictitious Name for Witness B, the Mother of the Victim identified as Witness A

Daniel JOHNSON -- Fictitious Name, Victim identified as Witness B

[UI] – Unintelligible

[SL] – Sounds like

1 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** This is the sworn statement of DEBORAH Johnson. Today's date
2 is the 25th of October 2008; the time is 4:32 in the afternoon. The statement is being taken at
3 the Orlando International Resort & Spa in Orlando, Florida. I have introduced myself to Ms.
4 Johnson as Bill E. Branscum, a private investigator employed by the Law Firm of Robert
5 Bernhoft, the Firm having an interest in one Troy David Stratos a/k/a Troy David Stafford. Ms.
6 Johnson, would you acknowledge for the record that you're aware I'm tape-recording this
7 statement?

8 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yes, I am.

9 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** And you're aware that it's a sworn statement and that when we
10 get to the end of it you're going to be asked to swear or affirm that the statement is true and
11 correct to the best of your knowledge and belief?

12 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yes.

13 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Tell me a little bit about yourself, who you are, where you're
14 from.

15 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** I'm Deborah Johnson, and I'm the mother of Daniel Johnson, and
16 Daniel – from Big Lake, Minnesota all my life. Daniel is my son who's twenty-six (26) and he
17 has brought Troy into our life, so that's how I know Troy.

18 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** When did you first become aware of the existence - how did you
19 know Troy? Troy Stratos or Troy Stafford?

20 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Stratos. Troy Stratos.

21 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** And how, when, and under what circumstances did you first
22 become aware that Troy Stratos existed?

23 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** In October of '07, so a year ago, Daniel came home. He surprised
24 me. He just showed up at the front door, which is very unusual for him, because of money

1 reasons and stuff. And I hadn't – I hadn't talked to him for awhile. We're - we have a
2 relationship where I almost talk to him every day and he had been ignoring my phone calls for
3 probably about a week. I was getting rather upset with him, because I didn't know what was
4 going on. So I left him a message and I said, "You should stop ignoring your mother and call
5 her and let her know that you're alive." And that same day, then, when I left the kind of nasty
6 message, he shows up at the door and surprising me. And he's all happy, and he's all giddy, and
7 all excited, and he's just different than what he had, you know - has been because I knew
8 something was going on. Then later on that evening he sits me down in the - in our family
9 room downstairs and he's like, "I've got to talk to you." And I go, "Well, what's going on? How
10 come you're home? What's - what's going on?" He said, "Well, I've met somebody." And I
11 said, "Well, is that - somebody must be, you know, pretty nice because you seem pretty
12 happy." And he said, "Yeah, he is, you know. This person" - he kept relating "This person is
13 really nice and offering me a job and I'm going to, you know, be working and making good
14 money and I just see my life going in better - better places." And he goes, "But there's just one
15 thing." And I kind of looked at him and I looked in his eyes and I said, "He's old" - or I said,
16 first of all, . I said, "He's a man?" and Daniel said, "Yes." And I go, "Okay." And I go, "But he
17 also sounds older," because he seemed like, you know, with all the stuff, the established
18 business and everything, I said, "He seems older." He goes, "Well, he is older." And I go - and
19 so I'm kind of shocked because Daniel has never had a relationship with a man and I wasn't
20 exactly sure where they were when he was saying that he met this person if it was business,
21 and he's excited because he's getting a job, or if it's more of a romantic type of thing. But he
22 came out and he said he truly liked this man. He really believed in Troy and that even though
23 Troy was - I think like six -maybe 14 years difference - I'm not sure how old Troy is - but that
24 he seemed young at heart, and that they had a lot in common, and he had just all these good

1 things about him to say. And I - you know, I was just kind of happy for him because he just
2 seemed so happy and like he had deserved to be happy.

3 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Did you - did you have any communication with Troy directly?

4 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** In about probably the - I think it was the first part of November
5 or sometime in November time frame we had planned a trip - our family had planned a trip to
6 Vegas. Daniel told Troy we were going to Vegas and Troy wanted to do all these nice things
7 for us and let us - because we were staying downtown, the old main part, in kind of the flea bag
8 hotel because we didn't have tons of money. So Troy is like, "Well, let me upgrade you and
9 you can stay in this really nice hotel" and stuff and this is all coming from Daniel. You know,
10 Troy is telling Daniel this and I said, "No, we're not doing that. I don't know this guy, you
11 know. We're not accept - we're not doing that." And I was being very stubborn about it,
12 because I didn't feel right about taking some things from someone I didn't know. And finally,
13 the day before we were leaving he - Troy actually got on the phone and that was the first
14 conversation I had with him. He says - he goes, "You are making this very difficult for me.
15 Daniel wants to surprise you and he wants to show up and be there for you when you get there,
16 but if you won't let him, you know - won't even help me to go to a nicer hotel, what am I
17 supposed to do?" you know. And I - he goes - so then he told me that his plan was that Daniel
18 was going to have a limo sitting at the airport for us. He was going to meet up with us at the
19 same time and take us to the - where did we stay? Stayed at Mandalay Bay. And finally I caved
20 and I said, "Okay." You know, and - because he's like, "You deserve - you know, he loves you,
21 and he wants to do this for you, and he just wants to treat you, and you deserve to be treated,"
22 and so finally I'm like, "Okay," you know. And that was the first conversation I had with him.
23 And then while we were in Vegas we - we stayed for four days and this whole time I keep
24 waiting for Daniel to introduce me to him or, you know, somehow figure out a way that we

1 were going to meet him. And he kept saying, "Mom, you know, he's got a lot of stress. He's
2 working on this. He's doing this. He's on the phone a lot. It's a bad time right now. You know,
3 we'll just - well, just be patient. You'll get to meet him." Then in the meantime we're - he's got -
4 he got us tickets to Mama Mia! He worked out a thing for Maverick Helicopters to take us on a
5 helicopter ride. I thought all of this - he gave - he had Daniel give us each \$500.00 for
6 gambling just to throw out there, you know, and have fun play - fun money play, because I'm
7 the nickel slot kind of person. I don't gamble \$50.00. I work hard for my money. I don't throw
8 money away, so he's like, "Tell your mom she has to spend that all on gambling, too. She can't
9 keep that as part of, you know, for the trip. She has to spend that. She has to have fun money."
10 Daniel was just having such a blast with all of that that he was getting to do this for me because
11 he's - you know, it was kind of cool. It was just kind of neat to be able not to be so concerned
12 about spend - you know, doing things like that. And finally, on our way back to the airport to
13 get - go home, I get a call on the cell phone and Daniel is like, "What are you doing?" and I'm
14 like, "Well, we're heading back." And, you know, we had said goodbye and - and then all of a
15 sudden he's like, "Well, Troy wants you to stay one more day." And I go, "What do you mean,
16 he wants us to stay one more day? He didn't want to - you know, he didn't have time to meet
17 us. What are we supposed to do?" "Well, can't you call in sick or can't you whatever? We'll
18 make the arrangements. We'll rebook the room for another night and, you know, can't you just
19 change your flight and we'll pay the change fee or whatever it costs to do that? And can you
20 just stay?" And Troy actually then got on the phone and said, "Why are you leaving without
21 me even getting a chance to meet you?" and I'm like, "But I was there the whole weekend.
22 Why didn't you - I'm confused." But I like - oh - you know, "Okay, I guess. Let's - we'll try it"
23 and both my husband and I called our bosses and said we missed our flights back and could we
24 stay - or we were going to stay another day and so we did. Then that's when we actually sat

1 down and had like brunch with Daniel and Troy. And I got to meet him face to face and he
2 hugged me and he's all, you know, "Oh, it's so nice to meet Daniel's mom. He says nothing but
3 nice things about you. I can tell you're an important part of his life" and he goes, "You are what
4 matters to him and I just - I want to, you know, make Daniel happy and do whatever I can to
5 make Daniel happy and that's to keep his mom happy, so, you know, that's what we're going to
6 do." And it was a nice breakfast. He talks a lot. He talked about himself, told us everything
7 about how he got his start, how he had this money overseas with oil and everything. You
8 know, it just seemed like a very – he seemed sincere, he seemed legit, too good to be true at
9 times. You're thinking, wow, because we'd never run into people with a lot of money. I mean,
10 we don't - that's not the social ladder we're at, so he was a little eccentric but he just seemed
11 like a very nice man and definitely had my son's best interests at heart.

12 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Did you personally see anything or hear anything as far as the
13 relationship between your son and Troy? Now, your son represented it to you and to me as
14 being a romantic personal physical relationship. Did you see anything or did Troy tell you
15 anything, I mean, that would make it clear to you that that was, in fact, the nature of that
16 relationship?

17 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Oh, definitely. Definitely because he - well, he came right out
18 and he asked me how I - how I was accepting what Daniel told me. And I said that - I guess
19 with my kids it's always about just whatever makes them happy. I will support whatever they
20 choose to do if it makes them happy if that's really what they want in their lives. It seemed to
21 me that Troy was making Daniel happy and that - so when I saw them together, I could
22 definitely tell. When Troy looked at him there was something there, you know, and Daniel
23 would look at him back and they would hold hands. They would - Troy would put his arm
24 around or Daniel would put his arm him. We went shopping and Der – and Troy would have

1 him trying on all these clothes and doing this little fashion thing and, you know, "Well, Mom,
2 what do you think about this? Don't you think he looks good in this?" and just - kind of just
3 like a wining/dining courtship was going on there a little bit and he - but he would - also he
4 tried to tell me that it was new to him. He kept saying, "I know this is new for your son. I
5 know this is new for me. I don't - I don't prof - you know, I'm not" - he goes, "I don't
6 necessarily like the gay lifestyle. I'm not out there pounding the gay pride, you know
7 organization. You know, this is so new to me and I know it's new to your son and we're just
8 trying to figure it out together." So he made it - he made it try to be like Daniel was really his
9 first male relationship. I didn't really believe that at the time. I had a hard time believing it.
10 He's 47 years old. You don't - I don't know. And he's never been married and he's never, you
11 know, so I guess - and he does just portray himself as a very feminine guy, you know, so with
12 the pedi - the manicures and pedicures and facials and just everything, so - but, yeah, he's - he
13 told me - he told me how much he cared about Daniel. He told me, you know, all the time he
14 was professing his love to Daniel and why Daniel was so important to him and that it mattered
15 that Daniel was happy. And he did - and he would say, you are - you know, sometimes I think
16 it bothered him that it was so important to Daniel because he - because there were times when
17 Daniel wouldn't talk to me on the telephone because Troy was around or he had to distance
18 himself.

19 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** You felt like Troy was deliberately trying to put a wedge
20 between you and Daniel?

21 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Sometimes I did. When I wouldn't hear from him for awhile then
22 I'd call, I wouldn't get an answer back or a response back, I would know it's because - even in
23 my heart I knew he wasn't answering the phone because Troy was there. I knew he couldn't

1 answer the phone because Troy was there. You know, it wasn't - I just felt like that wasn't my
2 kid.

3 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** I got the impression - well, when did you and I first meet?

4 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** In person?

5 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Uh huh.

6 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Or on the telephone?

7 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** In - when we first actually met.

8 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Oh, yesterday.

9 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** And when did Daniel and I first meet?

10 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yesterday.

11 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** And that meeting was together, correct?

12 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yes.

13 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** I found it a little unusual that a 26-year-old guy would choose to
14 have this conversation with an investigator he doesn't know, you know, with his mother
15 present. I got a very distinct impression that you two were a lot closer than most 26- year-old
16 sons are with their moms. I mean, your communication was much better and I kind of got the
17 impression he tells you everything that goes on in his life. Is this the first time that you kind of
18 felt distance from him?

19 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yeah. Yep.

20 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** And mothers have an intuition. But you felt like that Troy was a
21 decent - decent guy at first.

22 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Um-hum. Um-hum.

23 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** When was - so he did meet with you and he did talk to you.
24 When y'all stayed there at the Mandalay Bay do you know where Troy stayed?

1 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** THE Hotel.

2 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** THE Hotel. Do you know where Daniel stayed?

3 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** THE Hotel.

4 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** They shared the same room.

5 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yeah, I got pictures of the room. We went up to the room. It was

6 huge. It was like a room I've never seen before, high-roller room definitely. It was like wholly

7 bigger than my house.

8 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** I'm sure it was a little awkward for you.

9 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Um-hum.

10 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Minnesota mentality and some of these developments. Yeah.

11 Anything else of any big - big event while you were in Las Vegas? You met, you talked, you

12 done all those things.

13 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** No. Then we left in - it did both - it did kind of bother me,

14 though, because we left in - they probably stayed there for another week and that just seemed -

15 you know, I just had a hard time believing somebody could gamble that much and spend that

16 much time there and not have to get back to normal life or - I guess it's like you said, coming

17 from Minnesota, my "normal" and Troy's "normal" are so different, you know, but I was trying

18 to figure out - at that time, I didn't realize what Troy's normal was. I was trying to fit him into

19 my normal. So I was having a really hard time. "Daniel, why are you still in Vegas? You

20 know, when are you going back to Orlando?" Because it bothered me, too, that he stopped

21 working so much. His modeling was taken - you know, he'd tell me -

22 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** By "he" you're talking about Daniel?

23 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Daniel. Yeah. He - Daniel would tell me that he get - he was

24 supposed to go to a casting, but he was going to blow it off because Troy had him busy doing

1 something else or - and just things like that just kind of started bothering me. It was like, you're
2 giving up what you know and I kind of see - I just sort of saw him turning into somebody he
3 wasn't. He was becoming somebody he wasn't. Troy was molding him into someone he wanted
4 him to be. I saw that. I saw a literal emol - just the change in him. He gave up so much - such
5 a big piece of himself when he met Troy. Daniel is a pretty giving person and he just wanted
6 Troy to be happy. He kind of grew up in a domin - my husband was - ex-husband was very
7 domineering personality and I did that for 13 years. I gave up a lot of pieces of me and I think
8 that's - that little circle was happening, you know, and Daniel was - Troy was a lot like the ex-
9 husband, very controlling, very - could be very mean and abusive and verbally and - it was
10 easy for Daniel to kind of slide into it because that's what he grew up with.

11 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Now, when was the next time something significant happened?

12 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** In December Daniel called and said, "Troy wants to buy me a
13 house." And I said, "What do you mean, Troy wants to buy you a house?" and he was like,
14 "Well, he has this house and he wants to put it in my - he wants to put it in my name and buy
15 me a house." And I'm like - he goes, "Do I accept that?" and I go, "Well, I guess I don't
16 understand what it means. He's just going to down outright pay for a house and it's - put it in
17 your name "and it's yours or what?" and at first I think Daniel didn't exactly know how it all
18 was going to happen. Troy got on the phone with me then and was explaining to me that he had
19 this house. It was house in Wilton Manor and that he wanted to give it to Daniel. However, he
20 couldn't just give - turn over something that substantial amount of money to him because it
21 would have huge tax implications. So he told me that what he - his plan was going to be was to
22 take the money for the house and put it in a trust and that it would be all contracted out. He
23 couldn't touch the trust, that the - he - Grantor - is that right for a Trust? - Grantor for the Trust
24 would be responsible for making sure that every month that payment got paid, insurance and

1 taxes were paid, and that over the course of the year then the house would be paid up in a year.
2 Daniel would own this beautiful home. His credit would be immaculate because he, you know,
3 was able to show that he pur - you know, purchased a million-dollar home in his name and he
4 kept up - and paid it not in 30 years but in a year, you know, and stuff. And then we'd have a
5 place to go down there when we wanted to visit. It's a big house. We could stay anytime we
6 wanted to. And he just made sound like it was a - you know, he was intend - it was all in
7 Daniel's best intentions for him to just give him this house, that - that's what he wanted-to do
8 for Daniel and for him because that's - you know, he was going to buy a different house and
9 live on the beach and - but this was good property and a good investment and -
10 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Well, if he was going to buy a different house and live on the
11 beach and Daniel was going to live in this other house . . .
12 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** I know . . .
13 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** are they - does that mean they're going separate ways or . . .
14 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** I didn't kind of understand that very well. I really didn't
15 understand that, to be honest with you, but they're going to live in Wilton Manor. His plan was
16 he was looking at all this beachfront property and he wanted to - there was nothing there that
17 was movable for him, so they were going to stay in Wilton Manor for the time being. This
18 house on the beach was going to be like totally gutted and redone. So, you know, I just - it's
19 like a stepping house or something is kind of how I took it and then he's - and then I - but I
20 said, "Well, what happens when - if this - if your relationship doesn't work out and you choose
21 to walk away or Daniel chooses to walk away, what happens with this house?" and he said,
22 "Well, Daniel can just quitclaim deed it back over to me and it's - the title is back in my name
23 and he can just walk away. He can walk way anytime." I really believed that that was true. I
24 thought he could because I kept thinking that that money was going to be sitting in a trust fund

1 and that it would just be paid. I didn't really realize that mortgages were being put in Daniel's
2 name, you know, that the full-blown mortgage was in his name and all of that was done like
3 that. I'm not real estate expert either. I've only bought one house in my whole life in my own
4 name where I had to deal with all the paperwork. and so I guess I was pretty gullible, too, but -
5 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Essentially, then - and don't let me put words in your mouth, but
6 I'm - if I'm understanding the story, Troy is saying, "I have a house. I own it outright."
7 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Uh huh
8 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** "I want to give it to Daniel but I can't give it to Daniel because of
9 tax implications or whatever. So what we're going to do is, we're going to let Daniel borrow the
10 money to buy the house from me."
11 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yep.
12 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** "But then instead of giving me that money we're going to take
13 that money and put it in a trust account that" - a trust account that Troy would have no access
14 to.
15 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yeah.
16 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** "And then the very money that was borrowed to buy the house
17 would be used to payoff the note over the course of about a year."
18 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yeah.
19 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** "So it would look like on paper that Daniel had bought a house
20 so he wouldn't have been gifted a million-dollar house. He could show how he-bought it and
21 there wouldn't be any tax implications.
22 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yeah.
23 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Is that . . .

1 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** That's exactly the way I understood how it was supposed to
2 happen. Yeah.

3 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** So - and to your knowledge Daniel did end up go - following
4 through with buying the house?

5 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yes.

6 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** And do you know – did the rest of that financial wizardry happen
7 the way it was explained to you?

8 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** No. Not at all.

9 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** What happened to the money, if you know? Do you know what
10 happened to the money?

11 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** I don't know. I . . .

12 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** But you do know that Daniel was stuck with huge payments that
13 he had no way to make.

14 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Correct. Yes.

15 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Are you aware that he bought a second house?

16 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yeah, after the fact. Well, I can't even say "after the fact" but it
17 was really along in January. He called up very, very, very upset and he says, "**I'm** sitting here
18 and Troy wants to close on this deal and buy this house and I don't know what to do." And I
19 said, "Well, why is he buying another house? You have a house. You know, **I'm** not
20 understanding." And he's like, "Because he really is hoping that you guys will come down
21 here. He knows how I would just love for your - my family to be down here and he thinks that
22 if he - this house is a good deal because the developer or the contractor - I don't know who
23 built it - is in a world of hurt, needs to offload it, willing to offload for a couple hundred
24 thousand less than what it's worth. And so it is a good investment and it would be your

1 opportunity, Mom, to come down here. You like it down here. You like Florida. It'd be - we
2 could - you could get a job down here, you know. Troy says you could work for him and Scott
3 can work - when they start developing the beach property Scott can work as the electrician and
4 we could just all be happy down here. You know, I think it would be a good deal, but I don't
5 know what to do because I don't know if it's the right thing to do." I'm just like I don't know
6 what to - I did - I just wanted to support him and it would have been cool to be able to just like
7 - I hate Minnesota winters. I hate living in - I mean, it would have been cool to know that if it
8 all had played out like that that I would have had a nice house to live and - you know, and I
9 don't know. And I said, "You just need to" - I go, "I don't know what to tell you. I'm not a
10 lawyer. I don't know real estate. I don't know - I don't - I'm not down there looking at the
11 paperwork. I don't know what - I don't know what to tell you. I mean, you are going to have to
12 follow your gut and do what you think is the right thing to do." In all honesty, I just don't - I
13 think he knew he shouldn't have done it but he didn't know - he didn't - Troy had just control
14 over him. He did not know how to say no. He did not know how not to do it. He just was so
15 deep into it and Troy was so demanding. When Troy didn't get his way, he threw a fit. I mean,
16 he would get angry and he would literally throw fits. Daniel couldn't handle that kind of stress
17 either. He just wanted to do anything to keep the peace.

18 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Do you know how the second house deal worked out?

19 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** It's up for sale right now under short - trying to sell it for short
20 sale or it will be foreclosed on because Troy helped Daniel. Troy gave Daniel enough money
21 in their joint account. He would - I don't know how. Daniel would hound him and hound him
22 and hound him and say, "That's the one Troy knew is, I won't be late on my bills. I can't be late
23 on my bills." Finances bother him so bad. He was giving himself an ulcer worrying about it.
24 Troy would be like, "No, I'll get the money in the account and you can pay the mortgage and

1 I'll get it in and we'll take care of it. It won't be a problem." And he prob - he kept his word. He
2 kept his word and the house - both house payments were paid up through March, I believe. I
3 think up through March.

4 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** What happened in March?

5 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** We - that's when we came down here and - well, we were going
6 to come down for Daniel's birthday. Troy was going to - you know, he just says, "Come down
7 and spend time with Daniel for the birthday and we'll do all this great and wonderful stuff, and
8 I'll take you to a spa, and" - so we planned on coming down and making a week of it, my
9 husband and myself. Then a little later on in the week my daughter and her husband and their
10 little one came down. When we - before we got there, my husband likes to play private
11 investigator and he had - I didn't know he was doing this because he didn't want to worry me,
12 but he didn't have a good feeling about Troy, but he never told me about that. He was doing a
13 lot of Googling and searching and he found a site where it had mentioned Troy's name tied to
14 Nicole Murphy and it was site where you could blog your feeling - you know, what you felt
15 about it or whatever.

16 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Right.

17 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** And he made up a stupid name and he put a blog out there and
18 said, "If anyone has any information about this guy, Troy Stratos, I'd love to hear from you."
19 And people responded very cautiously because they thought that might have been Troy.

20 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Uh huh

21 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** But they would respond very cautiously and then it would go
22 back and forth very cautiously. And then finally they were - you know, could tell that people
23 were on the up and up on both sides of the thing. That is how he got connected with Sheri
24 Farley and Sam Farley. Sherrie gave her phone - or I don't remember who gave what, but they

1 exchanged phone numbers. The day before we were supposed to leave, he had talked to her on
2 the phone. I came home from work and he's like, "I've got to tell you some stuff" and that's
3 when it all just hit the fan. He took - I mean, everything he knew, everything he found out, and
4 my stomach just - I thought it was going to lose it. I felt so sick to my stomach. I just like,
5 "What do we do? What do we tell Daniel? What do we - we're going down there. What do we
6 do? How do we handle this?" Scott is like, "We've just got to tell him. We've got to get him out
7 of there. We - he - this is - Troy is not going to - you know, this is not going to work out the
8 way Daniel thinks it's going to work out. He's just done it to too many people." And so we
9 went down there and that first night he - Daniel's all happy and stuff and we're like, "We got to
10 sit down and talk to you. We had emails from these people that we printed out and phone
11 numbers." Then he'd read all of this stuff and he's like, "Oh, crap." And then he could- he was
12 starting to piece things together because from what we could tell him what - we had a long
13 conversation with Sherrie and Sam Farley on the phone and we picked up a lot of stuff. So I
14 went back - when I went down to Daniel I asked, "What about this guy? Do you know this
15 person? Is he still in Troy's life? What about this person? What about" - you know, we would -
16 and he's like, "Yeah, I know Adam." And, you know, "Yeah, I saw that property" or, yeah, you
17 know, and things - so he knew from what we gathered from these strangers, these people knew
18 Troy because they had those common links. He was just to sick to his stomach. He's like,
19 "Mom, what did I do? What did I do? What did I do?" And there was a lot of tears and I said,
20 "Well, I know what you have to do and that's get out of here and we need to go to the FBI and
21 we need to tell - pull all this paperwork." He started digging out all the paperwork and I started
22 going over them. I'm like, "I don't know if there's anything in here that would help what - you
23 know, what we have, but we just got to go do this. We've got to go report him." Because the
24 other thing that Sherrie and Sam said was an FBI agent in Sacramento was looking into this

1 case. So we thought if we could go down to Miami somehow we'd get them talking or
2 whatever. You know, something.

3 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Sure.

4 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** And we packed up Daniel's stuff and we got the heck out of
5 there.

6 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** And you did have a meeting with the FBI?

7 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** We did. Yeah.

8 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Okay. Now, in addition to the - y'all have given me a bunch of
9 documents and I just - that I understand you were instrumental in putting together, so I just
10 want to make sure that we mention them. What, we've got a stack of the financial documents
11 related to the various financial undertakings that Daniel got into. And then you have a series of
12 emails -

13 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Uh huh

14 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** from Troy that explain a lot about what was going or at least the
15 way Troy was representing it to be.

16 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yep, his relationship with Daniel.

17 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Yeah. And so those documents will be appended to this
18 statement so they can be made part of it. After you left, Troy continued to kind of have
19 conversations with Daniel or how did that go?

20 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Called all the time. All the time. Because Daniel kept - Daniel
21 just told him that he needed a break. He needed to just get away and think for awhile and so he
22 was going to go to Minnesota with us and he didn't tell him that he was packing up his
23 belongings and putting it back in his apartment that he first moved into with his little roommate
24 before he met Troy because then Troy would have known that was it, you know. He still

1 thought if he – he still was hoping Troy was going to follow through. I mean, he tried - you
2 know, and he still was - he was upset and he was angry but he still hadn't given up hope on
3 Troy at that time. And so, you know, yeah, Troy called a lot. Troy called a lot when he was
4 home. "When am I going to see you? What are we going to - what are you doing? How do we
5 fix this?" and Daniel was – his standard reply is "I just need time. I need to think. I need to - I
6 really don't like being stressed out about the mortgages getting paid and you're not giving me
7 enough confidence to know that they will be getting paid and get taken care of." Yeah, I'm
8 pretty sure it was April. Right away that next month when he was in Minnesota there was no
9 money for the mortgages. It's like, there's no Daniel so there's no money. And he'd talked to me
10 and he - you know, he'd get me on the phone. He - well, because Daniel would avoid his calls.
11 There'd be a time when he just couldn't handle him and he wouldn't answer the phone. Troy
12 had my cell phone number. I remember one day driving into work and the phone rings. I
13 answer it. It's a 45-minute drive from my house to my work. That whole 45 minutes on top of
14 another half-hour sitting in my car he's going on and on about how he misses Daniel and
15 Daniel, you know, I need to just have faith in him and he will make it all better. It will be
16 better. I finally literally blew a gasket because I was trying to be nice, too, because Daniel is
17 like, "Mom, I know how you feel about this guy but if there's any way he'll help pay some of
18 these bills, if there's any way he will send some money, you know, just bite your tongue. You
19 know, let me take care of it." But I finally - I just blew a gasket and I just laid in him like there
20 was no tomorrow and I said that I felt like he preyed on my son, and that he was a vulture, and
21 that he just waited for him, waited for him and found the perfect opportunity and took full
22 advantage. Then after that he did not talk to me anymore. He knew then I wasn't on his side. I
23 wasn't going to help him anymore.

1 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Is there anything else about this that we should talk about,
2 anything I haven't asked you about that you think is important?

3 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** I don't - no, I don't think so.

4 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Okay. Well, if you think of something else, we can always
5 [sounds like:] sit in later on. Do you know what "perjury" is?

6 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yes, I do.

7 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** So you understand that when you make a sworn statement you
8 have an obligation to tell the truth?

9 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yes, I do.

10 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Okay. Has anybody offered you anything or threatened you
11 anything, promised you anything, given you anything to get you to make this statement?

12 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** No.

13 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Do you feel threatened or intimidated in any way?

14 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** No.

15 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Well, mindful of your obligation to tell the truth in a sworn
16 statement do you swear or affirm that the statements that you made as commemorated in
17 videotape are true and correct to the best of your knowledge and belief?

18 **DEBORAH JOHNSON:** Yes I do.

19 **INV. BILL BRANSCUM:** Well, I do thank you very much for making this statement.