

the Lord.

PEOPLE. HEAR US LORD.

PRIEST. (*The Priest begins and goes into sotto voce.*) Lord, you who consoled Martha and Mary in their distress, draw near to us who mourn for Matthew, and dry the tears of those who weep. We pray to the Lord.

PEOPLE. HEAR US LORD.

PRIEST. You wept at the grave of Lazarus, your friend. Comfort us in our sorrow. We pray to the Lord.

PEOPLE. HEAR US LORD.

PRIEST. You raised the dead to life. Give to our brother eternal life. We pray to the Lord.

PEOPLE. HEAR US LORD.

PRIEST. You promised paradise to the thief who repented; bring our brother the joys of heaven. We pray to the Lord.

PEOPLE. HEAR US LORD.

PRIEST. He was nourished with your Body and Blood; grant him a place at the table in your heavenly kingdom. We pray to the Lord.

PEOPLE. HEAR US LORD.

PRIEST. Comfort us in our sorrows at the death of our brother; let our faith be our consolation, and eternal life our hope. We pray to the Lord.

KERRY DRAKE. My most striking memory from the funeral ...

NARRATOR. Kerry Drake, *Casper Star Tribune*.

KERRY DRAKE. ... is seeing the Reverend Fred Phelps from Kansas ... that scene go up in the park.

REV. FRED PHELPS. Do you believe the Bible? Do you believe you're supposed to separate the precious from the vile? You don't believe that part of the Bible? You stand over there ignorant of the fact that the Bible — two times for every verse it talks about God's love it talks about God's hate. (*Reverend Fred Phelps continues sotto voce.*)

KERRY DRAKE. A bunch of high-school kids who got out early came over and started yelling at some of these people in the protest — the Fred Phelps people, and across the street you had people lining up for the funeral ... Well, I remember a guy, I remember this skinhead coming over and he was dressed in leather and spikes everywhere and he came over from across the street where the

ROMAINE

protest was and he came into the crowd and I just thought, oh this is gonna be a really ugly confrontation. But instead he came over and he started leading them in amazing grace. (*The people sing "Amazing Grace."*)

REV. FRED PHELPS. We wouldn't be here if this was just another murder the state was gonna deal with. The state deals with hundreds of murders every single day. But this murder is different, because the fags are bringing us out here trying to make Matthew Shepard into a poster boy for the gay lifestyle. And we're going to answer it. It's just that simple. (*Reverend Fred Phelps continues sotto voce.*)

NARRATOR. Six months later, the company returned to Laramie for the trial of Russell Henderson, the first of the two perpetrators. It was to be a capital murder trial. When we got to the Albany County Courthouse, Fred Phelps was already there.

REV. FRED PHELPS. You don't like that attribute of God.

NARRATOR. But so was Romaine Patterson.

REV. FRED PHELPS. That perfect of attribute of God. Well, *we* love that attribute of God and we're going to preach it. Because God's hatred is pure. It's a determination — it's a determination that he's gonna send some people to hell. That's God's hatred ... (*Continues sotto voce.*) We're standing here with God's message.

We're standing here with God's message. Is homosexuality — is being a fag okay? What do you mean it's not for you to judge? If God doesn't hate fags, why does he put 'em in hell? ... You see the barrenness and sterility of your silly arguments when set over against some solid gospel truth? Barren and sterile. Like your lifestyle. Your silly arguments.

ROMAINE PATTERSON. After seeing Fred Phelps protesting at Matthew's funeral and finding out that he was coming to Laramie for the trial of Russell Henderson I decided that someone needed to stand toe to toe with this guy and show the differences. And I think at times like this when we're talking about hatred as much as the nation is right now, that someone needs to show, that there is a better way of dealing with that kind of hatred.

So our idea is to dress up like angels. And so we have designed an angel outfit — for our wings are HUGE — they're like big ass wings — and there'll be ten to twenty of us that are angels — and what we're gonna do is we're gonna encircle Phelps ... and because

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of our big wings — we are gonna COM-PLETE-LY block him.

So this big ass band of angels comes in. We don't say a fuckin' word. We just turn our backs to him and we stand there ... And we are a group of people bringing forth a message of peace and love and compassion. And we're calling it "Angel Action."

Yeah, this twenty-one-year-old little lesbian is ready to walk the line with him.

REV. FRED PHELPS. When those old preachers laid their hands on me it's called an ordination. Then they deliver a charge. Mine was from Isaiah 58:1 — "Cry aloud. Spare not. Lift up thy voice like a trumpet and show my people their transgressions."

ROMAINE PATTERSON. And I knew that my angels were gonna be taking the brunt of everything he had to yell and say. I mean, we were gonna be blocking his view and he was gonna be like pissed off to all hell ... So I went out and bought all my angels ear plugs. (*"Amazing Grace" ends.*)

MOMENT: JURY SELECTION

BAILIFF. The court is in session. (*All stand.*)

NARRATOR. Romaine Patterson's sister, Trish Steger.

TRISH STEGER. As soon as they started jury selection, you know, everybody was coming into my shop with "I don't want to be on this trial. I hope they don't call me." Or, "Oh my God, I've been called. How do I get off?" Just wanting to get as far away from it as they could ... very fearful that they were going to have to be part of that jury.

And then I heard ... Henderson had to sit in the courtroom while they question the prospective jurors. And one of the questions that they ask is. Would you be willing to put this person to death?

And I understand that a lot of the comments were. "Yes, I would."

JUROR. Yes, I would, your Honor.

JUROR. Yes, sir.

JUROR. Absolutely.

JUROR. Yes, sir! (*The jurors continue underneath.*)

JUROR. No problem.

JUROR. Yep.

TRISH STEGER. Well can you imagine hearing that? You know, juror after juror after juror ...

MOMENT: RUSSELL HENDERSON

JUDGE. (*"Amazing Grace" begins again.*) You entered a not guilty plea earlier, Mr. Henderson. But, I understand you wish to change your plea today; is that correct?

RUSSELL HENDERSON. Yes, sir.

JUDGE. You understand, Mr. Henderson, that the recommended sentence here is two life sentences?

RUSSELL HENDERSON. Yes, sir.

JUDGE. Do you understand that those may run concurrently or they may run consecutively?

RUSSELL HENDERSON. Yes, sir.

JUDGE. Mr. Henderson, I will now ask you how you wish to plead, guilty or not guilty?

RUSSELL HENDERSON. Guilty.

JUDGE. Before the court decides whether the sentences will be concurrent or consecutive, I understand that there are statements to be made by at least one individual.

NARRATOR. This is an excerpt from a statement made to the court by Lucy Thompson.

LUCY THOMPSON. As the grandmother and the person who raised Russell, along with my family, we have written the following statement: Our hearts ache for the pain and suffering that the Shepards have went through. We have prayed for your family since the very beginning. Many times throughout the day I have thought about Matt. And you will continue to be in our thoughts and prayers, as we know that your pain will never go away. You have showed such mercy in allowing us to have this plea, and we are so grateful that you are giving us all the opportunity to live. Your