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## CNN LARRY KING LIVE

**Interview With Family of George Smith; Interview With Hedda Nussbaum**

Aired December 13, 2005 - 21:00 ET

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LARRY KING, CNN HOST: Tonight, exclusive, Hedda Nussbaum 18 years ago in a crime that shocked America, her live-in lover Joel Steinberg beat her brutally and killed their adopted daughter. Now, he's a free man and she's here for her first interview since he got out of prison.

First, another exclusive, the family of the groom who vanished from his honeymoon cruise last July taking their desperate search to Capitol Hill; it's all next on LARRY KING LIVE.

Joining us first from Washington, George Smith III, the father of George Smith who disappeared from the cruise ship this summer; Maureen Smith, who is George's mother; Bree Smith, his sister; and Brett Rivkind, the attorney for the Smith family.

Last July a honeymoon cruise in the Mediterranean ended tragically for George Alan Smith IV and his bride, Jennifer Hagel-Smith. They were on a Royal Caribbean cruise line. The Brilliance of the Seas was the name of the ship.

Jennifer was told that her 26-year-old husband had apparently gone overboard. Blood was reportedly found inside the newlywed's cabin and below the balcony outside their stateroom. Since then, the Smith family has been looking for answers.

Brett, why in Washington today? What happened there today?

BRETT A. RIVKIND, ATTORNEY FOR FAMILY OF GEORGE SMITH IV: Today, Larry was very interesting. The Congress took a very hard look at a growing problem here in the cruise ship industry and went right to, we had FBI representatives, representatives from the Coast Guard and the Navy and the cruise line has been trying to promote statistics saying it's not a problem.

And, I quote the Congressmen, Larry. "Statistics are meaningless. We can't trust them because there are no requirements that these crimes be reported. We are relying on them to voluntarily report it." And, the FBI conceded, as did the Coast Guard and the Navy that they cannot rely on these statistics and that there is a problem.

KING: All right.

RIVKIND: Another Congressman called it a major problem, Larry.

KING: All right. Let's get into the story. George Smith was your son, right?

GEORGE SMITH III, SON VANISHED FROM HONEYMOON CRUISE IN JULY: Yes, it was.

KING: OK, and he married Jennifer Hagel.

G. SMITH: Yes.

KING: Are you in close touch with her by the way?

G. SMITH: Yes, we are.

KING: OK. How is she doing?

G. SMITH: I sat next to her at the meeting today and she seemed fine.

KING: All right. What happened to your knowledge? What did she say to you?

G. SMITH: You know, we really haven't discussed it too much. We haven't gone into it that much lately and a lot of it, you know, she can't say too much because of the FBI. They've pretty much, you know, told her to shut it down.

KING: She's not a suspect though is she?

G. SMITH: No.

KING: OK. Maureen, the mother of the missing George Smith, how did you learn about this?

MAUREEN SMITH, MOTHER OF GEORGE SMITH IV: We received a call at 6:30 on July the 5th from Jennifer's father saying that something terrible had happened to George on the cruise ship and that's how we found out.

KING: And, Bree, what do you know? Had your brother spoken to you before he went on his honeymoon?

BREE SMITH, BROTHER VANISHED FROM HONEYMOON CRUISE IN JULY: Oh, yes. I was actually living in Hong Kong at the time and I flew over for his wedding and the last time I saw him was the day after his wedding. My mother had a little luncheon for him and we waved goodbye and he went off on his honeymoon cruise and never came home.

KING: Where did they live, Bree? Where was the marriage?

B. SMITH: Well, they were married in Newport, Rhode Island but they were living in Greenwich, Connecticut.

KING: OK. And then they flew off to where?

B. SMITH: They flew to Barcelona and they had a few days in Barcelona before their cruise left.

KING: How long was the cruise out before he was missing?

B. SMITH: It was halfway through. I think it was about six, five or six days in.

KING: Brett, what can the family do legally?

RIVKIND: Well, at this point, Larry, we -- the family can bring a civil action against Royal Caribbean and seek to get answers on their own. They've been waiting over five months now quietly at the request of the FBI, grieving in private and they don't have any answers.

So, through the civil action, Larry, we can do discovery. We can take depositions and we've already requested a whole list of documents, information and answers to questions which we still haven't received yet.

So, through a civil action, Larry, they can hopefully hold Royal Caribbean accountable for their actions in this case but more importantly gain some important information that they don't have at this time.

KING: At today's hearing in Washington a spokesperson for Royal Caribbean addressed the committee about the Smith case, and here's some of what was said. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GREG PURDY, DIRECTOR OF SAFETY, SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENT FOR ROYAL CARIBBEAN CRUISES LIMITED: The Smith family has suffered a tragic loss and we extend our deepest sympathies to them.

We do not know what happened to George Smith, only that he tragically disappeared from a cruise but we continue to cooperate fully with the FBI in the hope that the agency will be able to provide solid answers and some measure of closure for the Smith family. As to Royal Caribbean's efforts, we believe that despite this terrible tragedy the cruise line handled George Smith's disappearance correctly and responsibly.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KING: All right, Brett, let's take the obvious. Two people are on a cruise. A man passes another man on a cruise. He doesn't like him. He picks him up and throws him overboard in the middle of the Atlantic or wherever. How is that a cruise line's fault?

RIVKIND: Well that's not the case here, Larry. As you know...

KING: No, but I mean how do we -- but that can happen right and a cruise line couldn't be at fault if someone throws

someone overboard.

RIVKIND: Well, it would depend on the circumstances, Larry. First of all, we think increasing public awareness as to crimes occurring aboard the ships would help as an increased security presence onboard the ship.

KING: All right.

RIVKIND: Today the cruise line wouldn't answer any questions about the amount of security that they actually have onboard ship who would constitute actual security officers or qualified security personnel.

It leads you to believe, as the Congressman said, if they had a lot of security personnel onboard who are qualified they would have wanted to volunteer that information to have been proud of that.

They didn't want to answer that question, Larry, so we think in your example maybe there will be instances that you can't prevent, of course, but the vast majority we believe through increased public awareness of the nature and extent of criminal activity on cruise ships and an increased amount of security would prevent most crimes onboard ships.

KING: George, what do you perceive happened? Blood was found where, George?

G. SMITH: Excuse me. There was blood found in the room. There was blood found in the bathroom and a little bit I guess out on the deck and then down on the awning over the top of the rowboat or whatever.

KING: Yes, and it was his -- it was his blood?

G. SMITH: I really don't know. The FBI hasn't really told us but we're assuming it is.

KING: Maureen, are you presuming the worst that your son was murdered?

M. SMITH: Yes, I am, Larry. I am at this point. It took me quite a while to reach this point but I'm starting to face the fact that it was probably my son who went overboard. And they said today that I think it was 75 percent of bodies don't come to the surface.

KING: No. Do you have any conceivable notion, Maureen, about who would want to do this?

M. SMITH: No. My son was just too nice. I really don't know who would do this to him. He was just a lovely young man and I just think it was -- from all accounts it was just from the word go it was like a ship out of control I heard. There was people on there that were out of control I heard.

KING: What do you mean drinking?

M. SMITH: Yes, drinking, partying too hard, picking fights. There was a lot of stuff going on, on that ship, and Royal Caribbean did not have control of that ship from the word go.

KING: Is it possible, Bree, that your brother had an altercation with someone on the ship, a fight? Did Jennifer tell you? Did he have a run-in? Did she spot someone who might have been mad at him?

B. SMITH: Jennifer hasn't mentioned anything about a fight to us. Anything is possible, Larry. We don't have any facts.

KING: Where was she when he went missing?

B. SMITH: That I actually don't know. I know that the FBI knows that information but we have not been told that information.

KING: She can't -- but she can't tell you her sister-in-law?

B. SMITH: Unfortunately, no.

KING: We'll take a break and we'll be right back; and then later, Hedda Nussbaum; Bill Maher on Thursday. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PURDY: We responded to the sole complaint made by a guest. We promptly called in the FBI and local authorities to conduct an investigation. We secured the Smith's cabin and the metal overhang and we conducted a thorough search of the ship.

We subsequently interviewed guests and crew who had any knowledge of the Smiths whereabouts that night and we collected all possible evidence from security camera tapes to charge card receipts and provided it to the FBI.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KING: George Smith, as we understand it, the ship didn't go back to the point where they think he went missing right?

G. SMITH: No, they didn't. After they left port they headed on to their next stop.

KING: So, therefore, if there was a murderer, the murderer was onboard traveling away from the scene of the crime?

G. SMITH: Basically, Larry. What we found out today though we didn't know that after the Turkish police left the boat, Royal Caribbean went in and they went into my son's room and basically packed it all up in Royal Caribbean bags and dumped all the stuff on the dock. That was quite -- I've learned that from Jennifer but I was quite shocked to hear exactly what had happened.

KING: Hey, Brett, why won't the FBI speak out on this a little and why won't they let Jennifer speak out?

RIVKIND: Larry, they have still the ongoing investigation and I think they may be zoning in or focusing on some suspects and they feel that if any part of their investigation is revealed or discussed it could interfere or hamper their investigation. It is very frustrating to the Smith family though and it has been for these past five months. But they've cooperated. They've been in touch with the FBI and they're heeding their wishes, Larry.

KING: Maureen, why couldn't Jennifer have talked to you in private just in a private room without the FBI or anyone present about your son?

M. SMITH: She's in the middle with the FBI. She's given them a wealth of information and there's no way I want the investigation of my son hampered and I'm not going to ask. I'm just going to wait. Time will tell what happened that night and she's working with the FBI and cooperating fully.

KING: Bree, has her life resumed any kind of normalcy?

B. SMITH: Well, I just think that how does it return to normalcy after only, you know, that many months? You know she's obviously devastated. She thought she was going to be starting a new life. They were very much in love. They had an amazing wedding and, you know, they were really very much enjoying their honeymoon before this happened. She was not able to return to teaching in Westport. She lived with her -- she has been living with her parents as far as I know.

KING: Brett, are you saying that cruise lines are dangerous?

RIVKIND: Larry, I think they're a lot more dangerous than the public thinks. That was discussed today at the hearing that 99 percent of anybody who goes onboard a ship it would not even cross their mind that they could be the victim of a crime and a very serious crime, yet they have been prevalent over the years onboard the ships.

And, we believe that the cruise ship industry has deliberately engaged in a systematic pattern or practice of keeping this quiet from the public because it hurts their public image.

So yes, Larry, I think that there are dangers aboard the ship. The public needs to be aware of that and Congress is now aware of it and Congress is obviously aware of the need for change and stronger regulations because of it.

KING: Now, is there a trick here? There's admiralty law involved. For example, the ship was flying under what flag?

RIVKIND: In this particular case, yes, the ship flies a Bahamian flag. The company itself is actually incorporated in Liberia. And then you have it sailing in international waters and territorial waters of foreign countries. So, you can imagine there's a possible jurisdictional nightmare...

KING: Yes.

RIVKIND: ...to a United States passenger who has been the victim of a crime and they don't know that.

KING: But how can a -- how can a Congress make law to subvert that?

RIVKIND: Well, that was what was discussed today, Larry. They wanted to know and I think that's what they're going to examine what authority they can exercise and to what degree in such situations and that was discussed today.

But they want to protect and they clearly stated that today at the hearings. We want to protect our U.S. passengers because there's millions of U.S. passengers going on these cruise ships every year.

And we don't want a situation where the cruise line decides voluntarily whether they're going to report an incident to the FBI or they're going to report it to the Turkish authorities, how long it's going to take to get the FBI involved in the investigation and what's going to happen to all the evidence in the meantime.

KING: And there's no question in your mind that the FBI has the authority to go in?

RIVKIND: Well, in this particular case, yes Larry. This was an incident involving a United States passenger in international waters so, yes, it's just -- it's our position that they just came in too late because of the cruise line's actions.

KING: Yes. George, you want what, a closure?

G. SMITH: Definitely want closure and some answers. I want Royal Caribbean to decide what really happened that night. I think there's been a cover up, excuse me, from the beginning and it continues. They just don't give us answers.

KING: Has the cruise line offered to your knowledge, Maureen, have they offered Jennifer or you a financial settlement?

M. SMITH: No.

KING: None?

M. SMITH: No.

KING: Are you suing for finances, Maureen?

M. SMITH: We're suing for answers. We're suing for answers to what happened to my son.

KING: Do you expect to find them?

M. SMITH: Yes, I do. We do.

KING: And you are confident?

M. SMITH: I'm confident we will find answers, yes I am.

KING: Are you, Bree?

B. SMITH: Yes. The FBI is 100 percent committed to this case. We have been informed that they're not going to let it go. They're very actively investigating and I just -- I think they will solve the case and make arrests and convictions.

KING: And, Brett, do you think laws will change?

RIVKIND: I think so, Larry, from today's hearings and I'm confident that Congress really, really, really feels a need for change and I think there will be changes, needed changes. I've been doing maritime law now for 23 years in Miami, the cruise ship capital of the world and today was long overdue.

And I believe changes will be made thanks to Congressman Shays starting this committee and these hearings today. And he said they will continue. This is not the end. There will be more hearings. Yes, Larry, we are confident there will be needed change made in the cruise ship industry.

KING: Good luck to all of you, George Smith, Maureen Smith, Bree Smith and attorney Brett Rivkind, sad story.

When we come back another sad story but at least there's recovery, Hedda Nussbaum, a former book editor, her battered face became a national school of domestic abuse.

She's written a book called "Surviving Intimate Terrorism." This is her first appearance since her former lover got out of jail. He murdered their adopted daughter. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Hers is a haunting face, a mask of suffering, a courtroom exhibit of the years of violence that disfigured a once pretty woman. Hedda Nussbaum may be a victim but she is not the victim. This trial was about the murder of a little girl, Lisa Steinberg, age 6, the legally adopted daughter of Nussbaum and Joel Steinberg, who died of abuse and neglect last year.

The two were arrested together but Steinberg faces a charge of second degree murder alone. Calling her a zombie, battered beyond will, the prosecutors cleared Nussbaum and made her their star witness. She testified that Steinberg would beat Lisa and that she would do nothing about it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KING: Joel Steinberg was convicted of manslaughter in 1988 after a trial that lasted many days with chilling testimony by our guest Hedda Nussbaum. Joel was given a sentence of eight and a third to 25 years. He was paroled at the end of June of 2004 spending 17 years behind bars.

Hedda has written a book, "Surviving Intimate Terrorism." There you see its cover. And, this is her first interview since her abusive live-in lover Joel Steinberg was released. Hedda was last on this show in June of 2003. At the time of that interview he was still in prison. What are the conditions, Hedda of his release? He can't contact you?

HEDDA NUSSBAUM: He's not allowed to have any contact with me or I believe the family of -- of our other child and Lisa's birth mother also.

KING: Where is the other child?

NUSSBAUM: He was returned to his birth mother.

KING: OK. And you are not living in -- he's in New York. He can't leave New York right?

NUSSBAUM: He's not allowed to leave New York and he's not -- apparently he cannot leave without getting permission from his parole officer yes.

KING: And, are you in a place you don't reveal?

NUSSBAUM: Yes, I moved from New York a year and a half ago and I am not letting people know where I'm living.

KING: Because of fear?

NUSSBAUM: And, I don't want anything to be known about my current life.

KING: And you don't want him to know if you're married, not married, what you're doing, et cetera?

NUSSBAUM: Correct.

KING: Because of?

NUSSBAUM: Well, because I do not want him to know, find out, and I don't want the press to find out and then eventually everybody will know where I am.

KING: But you have fear right? Or you don't want to be bothered?

NUSSBAUM: Well, a little of each.

KING: But you wrote a book.

NUSSBAUM: Yes, I wrote a book because I felt that I wanted to get the story out and I believed that it would help a lot of women because I used to go around giving talks at colleges and to women's groups and people told me that it helped them tremendously. So, I felt that the book would really be helpful to other women.

KING: Why go on television?

NUSSBAUM: I figured that in for a penny, in for a pound that I could get the book to more people if I went public with it and there is a risk.

KING: But also...

NUSSBAUM: I agree.

KING: You have neighbors do you not where you now live?

NUSSBAUM: Yes.

KING: Who may not know you.

NUSSBAUM: Well...

KING: Who now know you.

NUSSBAUM: Well, this is it. I would like to ask them that if they're seeing me now that my neighbors, my hairdresser, women I work out with at the gym do not run to the telephone and say, "Guess what" because I would like to keep it confidential. I am living under a different name in a different state.

KING: Do you believe, as you knew him...

NUSSBAUM: Yes.

KING: ...that if he could get to you he would harm you?

NUSSBAUM: I don't know. I really don't know. I don't know what his state of mind is these days. It's been a long time.

KING: All right. "Surviving Intimate Terrorism," the obvious question is why did you put up with it? It's never easy to answer I guess. The first time he hit you why didn't you -- out?

NUSSBAUM: Because he did not -- well, in general men who batter don't hit the woman until they have control over her and the way he...

KING: Control first.

NUSSBAUM: Control first and the way he got control it was three years I had been with him. The way he got control was to -- I was very shy in those days and he helped build me up and helped to bring me out...

KING: Was he a psychologist?

NUSSBAUM: ...so I thought he was -- no, but he acted, he used to work with me evenings almost like a therapist and help me to come out of my shell.

KING: Was he good at it?

NUSSBAUM: He was good at it. It worked. And, he used to push me to ask -- I was working for Random House. I started...

KING: Book editor right? NUSSBAUM: Yes, I started as an associate editor. He kept asking me, pushing me to ask for raises and then promotions and I went from associate to editor to senior editor and, of course, I realized that they wouldn't have given me raises and promotions unless I deserved it. But then I didn't see it that way. I believed that -- I gave him all the credit for everything and so I had him on a pedestal.

KING: Yes.

NUSSBAUM: And the first time he hit me I figured, oh, it was just a fluke. It would never happen again. But, of course, it did happen again.

KING: Now, tell me how the two children came to live with you.

NUSSBAUM: Well, Joel did as part of his legal practice, he was a lawyer, he did some private adoptions and these were both done that way.

KING: The boy and the girl.

NUSSBAUM: They were -- they were never official adopted. They were never completed.

KING: Did he ever bother the boy?

NUSSBAUM: No, absolutely not.

KING: Only the girl.

NUSSBAUM: Yes.

KING: We'll pick it up in a minute. The book, extraordinary, it's "Surviving Intimate Terrorism." No one knows it better than Hedda Nussbaum.

We'll also be including your phone calls. We'll be right back.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Accused child murderer Joel Steinberg heard testimony from former lover Hedda Nussbaum, which for the first time directly linked him to violence against 6-year-old Lisa Steinberg the night she fell into a coma.

NUSSBAUM: One thing he said was about Lisa "I knocked her down and she didn't want to get up again. The staring business had gotten to be too much for her."

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Nussbaum said Steinberg believed she and Lisa often hypnotized people by staring at them. He complained about it that night while allegedly freebasing cocaine.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK) (BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Hedda Nussbaum resumed her testimony, describing how in the months before 6-year-old Lisa Steinberg died, she saw her lover, Joel Steinberg, strike the child.

NUSSBAUM: Joel grabbed Lisa by the arms and shoulders, shook her, threw her down on the floor. And when she got up, he grabbed her, shook her again and threw her down. And that happened at least two or three times.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: She told how Joel Steinberg ordered her to dress Lisa in long-sleeve clothes to cover up bruises.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KING: The unbelievable story, it's all in her own words in "Surviving Intimate Terrorism," a book the feminist icon Gloria Steinem calls "a brave book."

What was the hardest part of writing it?

NUSSBAUM: Well, the hardest part actually was trying to reproduce Joel Steinberg's words, because, which I realized later, had so much power in them. He used to sit and talk to me. He'd go on and on for hours, and I was fascinated with him. But in a sense, those words were brainwashing words and manipulative words. And I wanted to get some sense of those words in the book. And I just couldn't write more than a half a sentence.

KING: Why only manslaughter? Why only 17 years?

NUSSBAUM: Well, that -- they believed that there was a compromise, the jury, because some people...

KING: Wanted him not guilty?

NUSSBAUM: Some people wanted him not guilty, some people were convinced that I had done it.

KING: Really?

NUSSBAUM: Yes.

KING: And what led that thinking to occur?

NUSSBAUM: Well, that was -- the large part of his defense was that I had done it.

KING: I see. Did he take the stand?

NUSSBAUM: No, he did not.

KING: So they think the jury compromised and went for manslaughter rather than second-degree murder?

NUSSBAUM: That's apparently, yes.

KING: What did she die of?

NUSSBAUM: I know what it was, but...

KING: But from battering?

NUSSBAUM: From battering, from a brain injury.

KING: Were you from a dysfunctional family?

NUSSBAUM: No, not at all. I had very loving parents. In fact, I was overprotected. And I think because I was overprotected, I was very trusting and vulnerable to somebody who was like that.

KING: Did your parents know Joel?

NUSSBAUM: Oh, yes. They loved him. They thought he was terrific.

KING: Did they know what was happening to you?

NUSSBAUM: No. I did not let them know.

KING: When did they discover this?

NUSSBAUM: I'm not sure, because he isolated me from my whole family. For several years, I didn't see them. And from all my friends. This is typical of abusive -- abusers do that, so that they won't -- so that the woman won't go and tell them, you know, what's happening. And, of course, at a certain point, I didn't want them to see me once I had injuries that were apparent. I didn't want them to see me.

KING: What was it like to testify?

NUSSBAUM: Well, the only thing I wanted -- that I would have -- so that I would have confidence, I made sure that I did not look at Joel during the -- when I testified. I made sure that the bunk, you know, the judge's bunk blocked my view of him.

KING: Didn't want to look at him?



NUSSBAUM: I didn't want to look at him.

KING: You were still afraid of him?

NUSSBAUM: I guess I was. Yes.

KING: He committed infidelity, did he not?

NUSSBAUM: Yes.

KING: Why didn't that end it? He admitted it to you, right?

NUSSBAUM: He admitted it to me. In fact, see, I thought that -- he blamed his infidelity on me, that I wasn't giving him what he needed, and I felt that, well, at least he's not doing this behind my back, he's coming and telling me.

KING: Boy, you were a glutton.

NUSSBAUM: I wasn't a glutton, I was -- I had been manipulated, I had been what I call brainwashed. Really, and -- and -- I believe that little by little by little, I started losing myself. And it happened so gradually that I wasn't aware of it.

KING: How did you recover?

NUSSBAUM: I was in psychiatric hospitals for a year and a half. And I had a lot of support. My family, even though I had been isolated from them for years, they were right there for me immediately. A lot of my old friends came back. And I had support, I had a lot of support of a lot of women around the country.

KING: How old is the boy now?

NUSSBAUM: He's 19 now.

KING: You hear from him?

NUSSBAUM: No. Never had -- they have never wanted him to have any contact.

KING: How long was he with you?

NUSSBAUM: He was 16 months old. I had him from the time he was a day old.

KING: To 16 months.

NUSSBAUM: Until 16 months, yes. So he was like my own baby.

KING: Yes, obviously, he was.

Do you miss the little girl?

NUSSBAUM: Do I? Oh, of course, I miss both of them. It was very difficult for me to get over losing both my children.

KING: Did Joel have any remorse?

NUSSBAUM: Apparently not. And that's why he was never released on parole. Because the parole board felt he never had any remorse. He never even admitted to having done anything wrong.

KING: He did 17 months with time off, then?

NUSSBAUM: Seventeen years.

KING: Seventeen years with time off.

NUSSBAUM: Time off for good behavior, yes. KING: We'll be right back, and when we come back, we'll be including your phone calls for Hedda Nussbaum. The story is "Surviving Intimate Terrorism." A great title. Tough lady. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: The 911 call you made -- before we go to calls, the book is "Surviving Intimate Terrorism," the author is Hedda Nussbaum. Was that when you found your daughter?

NUSSBAUM: No, first, Joel -- when I said -- when I wanted to call 911, he said, no, first give me a chance to try and revive her. So he did that, and when he finally felt that he couldn't -- because I think he panicked finally when he saw that she seemed to have stopped breathing.

KING: And he told you to call?

NUSSBAUM: So he said, call 911. I waited for him to tell me, though, to say, do it.

KING: That's how controlled you were?

NUSSBAUM: That's how controlled I was.

KING: And let's listen to that call.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

911 OPERATOR: Was she eating something? I'm just trying to find out why she would just stop breathing.

NUSSBAUM: I think -- I don't -- I don't really know exactly why.

911 OPERATOR: You really don't know? OK.

NUSSBAUM: Food is coming up. She's throwing up a lot of food and water. My daughter, she's congested and she's stopped breathing. She's six years old.

911 OPERATOR: OK, she's having difficulty breathing?

NUSSBAUM: She's not breathing. I'm giving her mouth-to-mouth.

911 OPERATOR: OK. A six year old there -- OK -- I'm going to connect you to the ambulance.

(END AUDIO TAPE)

KING: They got there real fast.

NUSSBAUM: Yes, they did.

KING: Let's take some calls for Hedda Nussbaum. Augusta, Kentucky. CALLER: Hello. Love your show, Larry. Hedda, where's your book located at? Where can I get it?

NUSSBAUM: You can get it on-line, Amazon.com, Barnesandnoble.com and probably many bookstores, you can always order it if they don't have it in stock.

KING: But Amazon certainly has it?

NUSSBAUM: Amazon certainly has it.

KING: Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Hello.

CALLER: I was just wondering if I could ask you a question that's a little bit brazen. I empathize with your situation and have followed it for almost 20 years. I'm just curious. You look really good. I wonder if you had reconstructive surgery since and I hope you found some peace.

NUSSBAUM: Thank you. Yes, I had reconstructive surgery several times, yes.

KING: Out of necessity?

NUSSBAUM: Out of necessity, yes.

KING: How did you get over? What did they do in the psychiatric clinics and all your visits that helped? How did you beat this problem?

NUSSBAUM: It's not -- there's not a simple answer I can give you. I was in a wonderful hospital called Four Winds Hospital in Katonah, New York. During -- when -- at the time I was there, they had a program, it was like going to college, you go to different therapy groups, you had a schedule, plus individual therapy.

It was just wonderful. It just took time, and one day, the day -- I call it the day my eyes opened, suddenly, I saw Joel Steinberg for who he really was.

KING: So, when you were testifying, you were given immunity, right?

NUSSBAUM: No --

KING: They didn't charge you?

NUSSBAUM: They dropped the charges before I testified, yes, because the district attorneys believed my story and that I was incapable of having done it.

KING: When you were testifying, were you still in love with him?

NUSSBAUM: No, no, I wasn't still in love with him. I felt I was still in love with him for about ten months after --

KING: The child died?

NUSSBAUM: Yes.

NUSSBAUM: Because of everything that had been done to my head. On the days my eyes opened, I suddenly saw him, then I felt I was no longer in love with him and it made testifying a lot easier.

KING: What do you think when you see him now, see that picture of him.

NUSSBAUM: I really don't have very many feelings at all at this point.

KING: Empty?

NUSSBAUM: Excuse me? It's kind of empty, I would say, yes. There are moments when I feel huge rage and anger, but generally just empty.

KING: San Diego, hello.

CALLER: Hello, Larry, love your show. Miss Nussbaum, I was just wondering do you have any contact with your daughter's biological mother?

NUSSBAUM: No, I've never had any contact with her at all.

KING: That was an illegal adoption, right?

NUSSBAUM: It was never legalized. I never liked the term illegal adoption but it was never made legal. It was never completed.

KING: She would have been 24 now?

NUSSBAUM: Yes, she would.

KING: Good little girl?

NUSSBAUM: She was wonderful. She was a very, very special child, very talented, bright.

KING: How did you deal with all the frenzy? "Law & Order" did an episode on this?

NUSSBAUM: Yes.

KING: How did you deal with it?

NUSSBAUM: I found it very difficult at first because people didn't understand domestic violence in those days and a lot of people were blaming me. There was a lot of horrible stuff written about me and said about me that was totally inaccurate.

It was very painful until I got to the point where I realized that the people who were against me just didn't understand, that I couldn't let it destroy me. KING: It must have been a hectically incredible, photographers, stories, newspapers, people following you around. How did your parents react?

NUSSBAUM: They had a very difficult time with it but they decided to -- they gave interviews to the press, and I think my sister had the hardest time with it.

KING: Younger or older?

NUSSBAUM: Older. She was -- is two years older than me. It was very painful for her, what the press were saying about me and all the attention and everything.

KING: Parents still living?

NUSSBAUM: No. Both my parents have passed away.

KING: We'll be back more with Hedda Nussbaum, her book is "Surviving Intimate Terrorism." Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Before we continue with Hedda Nussbaum, let's check in with Anderson Cooper, he'll host "AC 360" at the top of the hour. He's in Iraq all this week. This morning he's in Baquba, Iraq. What's up, Anderson.

ANDERSON COOPER, CNN ANCHOR: Hey, Larry. We're in Baquba, Iraq, 35 miles north of Baghdad. We're on the forward operating base Warhorse. U.S. military really on the front lines in the insurgency here.

This was a hotbed of insurgent activity last year. It's a real success story on the part of the U.S. and Iraqi forces. Tonight, we'll take you out on patrol showing you the front line battle against these insurgents who everyday are improving their tactics using IEDs, improvised explosive devices, we'll take you to the front line of the fight against the insurgency, Larry..

KING: That's at the top of the hour. Ten eastern, seven pacific. Anderson Cooper, arguably the best field reporter in the business.

Chicago, hello.

CALLER: Hello, Larry.

KING: Hi.

CALLER: I guess my question is with all these comments about what a wonderfully courageous woman, what kind of wonderfully courageous woman would let these beatings go on to this innocent child?

NUSSBAUM: First of all, I never saw him hit her. What I testified to was once I did see him shake her and throw her. I never saw him hit her. As far as I know, I don't know how many beatings there were.

KING: Did you see markings on her?

NUSSBAUM: Yes. I believe at that time I was basically a zombie by then. My whole self was gone, was destroyed. Certainly, if I had been the me I am today, none of that would have gone on. But I wasn't able to do anything.

KING: So you look at that as a different person?

NUSSBAUM: I look at that, in a sense, as a different person, yes.

KING: By the way, LARRY KING LIVE tried more than once to get a statement from Joel Steinberg through his attorney, Darnay Hoffman. Mr. Hoffman did not respond to our request.

Has he done any interviews, to your knowledge?

NUSSBAUM: Not -- not recently. Not recently.

KING: To Snyder, Texas. Hello.

CALLER: Hello, Larry.

KING: Hi.

CALLER: I was wanting to know, I was in a relationship about like yours. Why didn't you get out the first time he hit you, or the first time you found out that he was harming the kid?

NUSSBAUM: Well, the first time he hit me, I believe I said this earlier in the show, he had -- I thought -- he had gotten me to believe that he was just such a wonderful person. He had helped build me up and pushed me to ask for raises and promotions. And I gave him all the credit and thought the first time that it was just a fluke, it would never happen again.

And by the time -- as I said, it was years and years of myself going downhill until he harmed the child, that I was just incapable of doing anything.

KING: Were there a lot of drugs involved in this?

NUSSBAUM: There were a lot of drugs.

KING: Yours too, you did it, too?

NUSSBAUM: I did it with him, because he felt that it made us -- helped us communicate better.

KING: Did what, coke?

NUSSBAUM: It was coke, it was freebased cocaine, which is like homemade crack, really is what it is, and you smoke it.

KING: And smoked it with the little kids around?

NUSSBAUM: Not -- no, only when Lisa was asleep at night. We didn't -- the only time -- the last few weeks, Joel had gotten a kilo of cocaine from a client that he was holding. And then he started doing it during the day all the time, and

sending Lisa out to play with her friends.

KING: Queens Village, New York. Hello.

CALLER: Hi, Larry, you're the best. Hedda, I have a two-part question.

NUSSBAUM: Yes.

CALLER: Number one, did you love Lisa? And where was your mother's instincts to protect her? Thank you.

NUSSBAUM: Oh, I loved Lisa very, very much. I loved both my children very much. My mother's instincts to protect her, as I said, I believe that I was not a whole person anymore. Little by little, myself had been eroded, very, very slowly, and if I could go back and redo it, everything would be different, but obviously, I can't do that.

KING: Is your life happy today?

NUSSBAUM: Yes. My life...

KING: You're not going to tell us anything about it.

NUSSBAUM: I'm not going to tell you about my life today, but...

KING: But are you happy?

NUSSBAUM: Yes, I am. I am. Of course, I'd be happier if I had my children, but, basically, yes.

KING: We'll take a break and be back with more. The book is "Surviving Intimate Terrorism." The author is Hedda Nussbaum. Don't go away.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOEL STEINBERG: I do not hit, strike or use any form of force or discipline of any sort.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Steinberg denied claims he beat Lisa because she stared at him. What's undisputed, Steinberg and Nussbaum had illegally adopted Lisa at birth. Her teachers saw bruises over time. Neighbors heard screams from their West Village brownstone, but no one investigated.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We're back with Hedda Nussbaum. Albuquerque, New Mexico, hello.

CALLER: Hello.

KING: Hi.

CALLER: Thank you, Larry, for a wonderful show.

KING: Sure.

CALLER: I wanted to ask Hedda how she has recovered from the death of her daughter. I lost a baby daughter over 50 years ago, and I still mourn her death. Does she feel -- can she feel totally happy knowing that she was involved when her child was killed?

NUSSBAUM: Of course, I still mourn her death. She was a wonderful, loving, beautiful, sweet child. I think she was an exceptional person. And it's painful to me that she is no longer in this world.

KING: Do you take blame?

NUSSBAUM: I have come to realize that anything that I was unable to do was because of what Joel Steinberg did to me, and I have been able to put the blame where I believe it belongs.

KING: What advice do you give to women who are abused? What do you say to them?

NUSSBAUM: Well...

KING: No one knows it better than you.

NUSSBAUM: Well, there's one thing, and that is that they should have a safety plan, which I didn't. I attempted to leave -- I ran -- I actually left five times and attempted to leave six. The first time he came home and found me and I ended up on the floor, packing. But they need a safety plan, where they will have a plan where they're going to go and who they're going to go.

Actually, the way I have taught it to women is the three P's -- pick, pack and photo copy. Pick someone you know you

can trust that you can run to. Pack a little bag in advance with things that are necessary, like medications, a change of underwear, anything really important, and photo copy important papers, like marriage license, if you're married, birth certificates of children, and put them in the bag and leave it with the person you can trust so that if you have to leave any time day or night, you know where you can go.

I never was able to. I never knew where to go, and I always ended up coming back.

KING: And also, a lot of women stay, right? They don't...

NUSSBAUM: Oh, yes, of course they do. They stay, or they leave and come back. The average is five times that they leave and come back. KING: Usually, liquor is involved, right?

NUSSBAUM: I think sometimes, yes.

KING: I mean, that's what we've come to think, the man gets drunk and he comes home.

NUSSBAUM: Well, that's often true, yes.

KING: And was Joel always high when he hit you?

NUSSBAUM: No. In fact...

KING: He hit you when he was sober?

NUSSBAUM: He hit me when he was sober. Most of the time, he was sober.

KING: How do you think he'd have handled prison?

NUSSBAUM: I really don't know. I believe, though, that in prison, that the other prisoners would not have been kind to him because of what he did to a child.

KING: I would guess that. And now do you know what he's doing? He's got a part-time -- what is he doing?

NUSSBAUM: I only know what I heard from the press, and that is that he's working part-time, and living in New York City.

KING: Thank you, Hedda. The best of luck to you.

NUSSBAUM: Thank you very much.

KING: Thank you for coming forward. Hedda Nussbaum. The book is "Surviving Intimate Terrorism."

Tomorrow night, we can't announce it tonight, but a special guest will be here that may have some new evidence on an old crime. You'll want to tune in. And Bill Maher will be here Thursday.

Right now, we go across the seas again, back to Iraq. Standing by is Anderson Cooper. He's in a very special place tonight to host "AC 360."

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