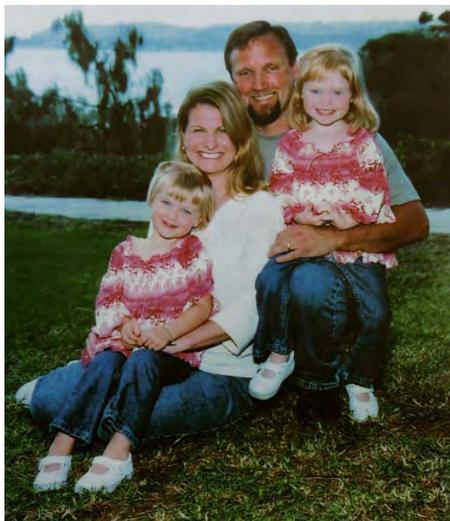


THE ORANGE COUNTY BETA REGISTER

'I wish I can have my daddy back,' murder victim's girls say

By [KIMBERLY EDDES](#)

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SANTA ANA - The wife of a Home Depot manager shot and killed during a robbery sobbed on the witness stand Tuesday as she described how she told their 3-year-old twins that their daddy was never coming home.

A woman at the emergency room had told her to tell the girls he got a big "Owie" at work, and it was so big he couldn't breathe and that he died.

"I had to get down on my knees, and I told them the story the lady told me to tell them," a weeping A.J. Egan said. "They cried and they cried and they cried. And I cried and cried."

Jason Russell Richardson, a twice-convicted rapist with a history of violence, [was convicted April 28 of first-degree murder](#) with special enhancements of committing murder during the course of a robbery, committing murder during the course of a burglary and use of a

firearm. The gun was never found.

Disguised head to toe in white painter's coveralls, a yellow hard hat, a dust mask and gloves, Richardson tried to rob the safe at the Tustin Market Place Home Depot on Feb. 9, 2007, but when plans went awry, he shot Tom Egan, stepped over his body and settled for "chump change" from the cash registers.

Defense attorneys argued Richardson, 39, endured a horrific childhood. He had no idea who his father was. His mother shot heroin and drank while she was pregnant with Richardson, associate public defender Hector Chaparro told jurors. And both potential fathers were in prison when Richardson was born, he said.

Richardson's mother and grandmother were drug addicts and dealers who shuffled him around the extended family until he finally emancipated himself at 17, Chaparro told jurors.

At 3, Richardson woke up crying to find his mother and father fighting. His father had fired a gun into the wall. He'd have nightmares after his drug-addicted grandmother told him that when she died she wanted him to be buried in the same coffin with her.

Two years after being emancipated, Richardson broke into an ex-girlfriend's house and beat and raped her. A year later, he kidnapped, beat and raped another ex-girlfriend, dropping her off in the middle of street. When he was arrested on suspicion of [killing Home Depot assistant manager Tom Egan](#), Richardson was on parole for beating his wife.

"Childhood matters," Chaparro told jurors. "What happened during childhood affects the development of the adult."

No mention was made that Richardson is a married father of young children.

Jurors must now decide whether Richardson will serve life in prison without the possibility of parole or be sentenced to death.

In the first day of the penalty phase of Richardson's death penalty trial, a parade of Tom Egan's family and friends took the stand to talk about life with him and the hole that was left without him there. Tom Egan was there in court, too, in a way.

His mother, Linda Obermoeller, wears his ashes in a locket around her neck.

In an emotional day that left jurors in tears, one of Richardson's ex-girlfriends took the stand to describe being punched and repeatedly raped by Richardson after he broke into her San Dimas house in 1990. She had broken off the two-month relationship, she said, but he didn't want it to end.

Richardson was always trying to get back together, but she wanted the relationship to be over.

"I already knew the type of person that he was," she said, "and he scared me."

Standing in her room, he kicked the phone off the hook and punched her, the sobbing woman said.

"He kept yelling about how he just wanted to spend time with me," she said. "He said, 'I should beat your (expletive) for hurting me.'"

"I was trying to scream, but he was punching me in the stomach," the woman said. "It knocked the wind out of me, and he pushed me on the bed."

He raped her, putting his hand over her mouth, and then forced her to orally copulate him before shoving her into the shower, she said. He raped her again and then ordered her to get dressed and go with him to a court hearing, she said. If she tried to run, she was going to pay, she said he told her. After court, he took her to eat, she said.

"He wanted to go to Denny's because he was hungry, and I just wanted to go home," the woman testified, dissolving into tears. After he left her house and she made sure he was really gone, she ran to a neighbor's house for help.

A.J. Egan testified about her love affair with Tom, her "soulmate" and "best friend."

A first date at Don Jose's and long conversation over tacos. A 10-year courtship, slightly interrupted by his 9-month tour in Okinawa. Hard as that was, Tom Egan wouldn't let his girl forget she was his. Every day, he wrote her a handwritten letter. Every month, he sent her a dozen red roses. And their love was measured in \$1,000 phone bills because they just couldn't get enough of what they each had to say.

They married on the 10th anniversary of their first date in a Laguna Beach ceremony. A.J. Egan talked about their first condo and the day they found out she was pregnant with twins. She panicked. He couldn't have been happier.

A.J. Egan sobbed along with many of the jurors as they watched a 3-minute video of Tom playing with his girls in Hawaii, sledding at Big Bear Lake and playing with a plastic kitchen set they got for Christmas.

Now the twins ask Santa for their daddy.

"Every year, they ask for their daddy," A.J. Egan said. "Every birthday, when they blow out their candles, 'I wish I can have my daddy back.'"

For a long time, Egan's mother kept her son's last answering machine message – just to hear his voice.

"Hey, Mom," Egan's voice would say. "It's the kid. Just called to say 'Hey.' "

The defense will continue its case Thursday.

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