

Dateline NBC Hidden Camera Investigation of Wilhelmina Scouting Network

SHOW: Dateline NBC

DATE: April 18, 2003

MODEL BEHAVIOR?

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Announcer: From our studios in New York, here is Jane Pauley.

JANE PAULEY: Good evening. It was a mystery that gripped the nation for months. Now there's been an arrest in the case of Laci Peterson, the young mother-to-be who disappeared on Christmas Eve. Police have taken her husband, Scott Peterson, into custody. The late-breaking events come after authorities identified remains that washed up ashore this week in California as those of Laci Peterson and her infant son. She was eight months pregnant when she vanished. We'll have a complete report from Modesto later in the broadcast with all the latest developments.

But first, we bring you a DATELINE Hidden Camera Investigation. It's a look at a thriving industry that appeals to thousands of young people. Talent scouts offer access and opportunity to those hungry for their first big break, especially in modeling. How much do they really deliver? Tonight, DATELINE goes undercover. Here's Victoria Corderi.

VICTORIA CORDERI reporting: (Voiceover) Imagine you are strolling down the street or in a mall or, like this woman, on a beach, and someone approaches to tell you something flattering that could change your future.

(People walking; Gilma Mendoza walking on beach)

Ms. GILMA MENDOZA: She's like, 'How tall are you?' So then I told her I'm 5'8". And she's like, 'I would love my office director to see you. You have a great look.'

CORDERI: (Voiceover) Gilma Mendoza said it was a talent scout who spoke those magic words that day on Miami Beach. She had always wanted to be a model but so far had little luck breaking into the business.

(Mendoza; photo of Mendoza)

Ms. MENDOZA: I was happy. I was like, 'Oh, my God,' you know? 'Yeah, you know, I got scouted and I'm going to go and, you know, things are going to happen.'

CORDERI: (Voiceover) So what did happen to Gilma and thousands others all over the country just like her? You'll see as DATELINE takes a hidden camera look at an aspect of modeling you