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CNN LARRY KING LIVE

Interview With Bridget Marks, Lorrie Morgan

Aired July 5, 2004 - 21:00 ET

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(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)
 LARRY KING, HOST: Tonight, a mother screams and cries on the street as her four-year-old twin girls are taken from her after she claimed their married father had sexually abused the girls.

Now that mother, socialite and former "Playboy" model Bridget Marks tells her side of a custody battle headlines coast to coast.

And then talk about sensational. Country star Lorrie Morgan. Tired affair, domestic violence, restrained rest of the story of her very public breakup and reconciliation with another country star, her fifth husband Kershaw. It's all next on LARRY KING LIVE.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

KING: We welcome to LARRY KING LIVE a woman with a really incredible story: Bridget Marks, a woman who posed for "Playboy" magazine in '92 now in a very public and sensational battle for custody of her two young girls Amber and Scarlett.

Her lawyer, Tom Shanahan, is with us, too.

Bridget Marks had a bicoastal affair with a married man, John Aylsworth, a California-based casino owner. She became pregnant by him with twins. He won custody of his daughters after a courtroom clash that involved child sex abuse, gag orders and psychiatric evaluations.

We asked John Aylsworth and his attorney to join us tonight. They declined but did provide this statement: The Aylsworth family love Amber and Scarlett very much and do not feel that media exposure is in the best interests of the children. Mr. Aylsworth fully supports and hopes that the children can have a healthy relationship with their mother.

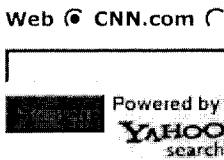
My first question for Bridget Marks, when she met John Aylsworth, did she know he was married?

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

BRIDGET MARKS, IN CUSTODY BATTLE FOR CHILDREN OF AFFAIR: Not when I first met him, no.

KING: Did you later discover? MARKS: I was -- yes, he told me he was married. I actually discovered he was married.

KING: Were you already pregnant?



MARKS: No, I was not.

KING: But still you continued the relationship?

MARKS: Unfortunately, yes, I did.

KING: Why?

MARKS: Because I believed that he was planning to leave his wife, he was unhappy, as he said, in the past. And at the time I trusted him.

KING: When you got pregnant, did you -- firmly figure he'd leave his wife?

MARKS: It was an accident, so...

KING: But you were pregnant?

MARKS: I was pregnant.

KING: And when you told him about it, did you expect him to leave his wife?

MARKS: Well, we were planning a life together, and then three or four months into the pregnancy, at the fourth month, his wife found out about the relationship through a receipt from frequent flyer miles.

KING: So you then knew the affair was over and he was going to stay with her?

MARKS: Yes. But I don't believe in abortion. I'm pro-choice, but I opted to have my children.

KING: You had the children. It was a successful delivery?

MARKS: Yes.

KING: They were twin girls.

MARKS: Yes. They were beautiful girls.

KING: I know. We'll be showing pictures. Did you expect him to support them?

MARKS: I -- I really didn't want anything from him.

KING: Does he have children with his wife?

MARKS: Four grown children. KING: Had you heard from him during those three years? Did he inquire about the twins?

MARKS: Yes, actually. We did see each other on and off, and...

KING: Had he at this point asked for custody?

MARKS: No.

KING: No?

MARKS: No.

KING: So he's not asking for custody. What does he want? What's his point?

MARKS: He wanted -- he wanted to stay in the relationship with me and...

KING: Did he continue to see the children up to that time?

MARKS: I never denied John visitation with the children whenever he requested it. There was -- there were documents, but I never denied John visitation.

KING: Did his children love him?

MARKS: The children have always had a good relationship with their father.

KING: When he -- did he sue to take them away from you? Did he say he wants full custody?

MARKS: Yes.

KING: All right.

Were you then retained?

TOM SHANAHAN, ATTORNEY FOR BRIDGET MARKS: No, I did not represent Bridget in the family represent her now for purposes of the appeal.

KING: I see.

SHANAHAN: When we return to family court. First, John sued for visitation; he didn't sue initially for c when certain issues came up and Bridget and others reported what they believed to be good faith all misconduct, he then amended the petition from visitation, then seeking custody.

KING: Would he have gotten visitation?

SHANAHAN: Yes. I don't think that Bridget...

MARKS: I -- I have never fought John's access to the children. I've only been a mother seeking to prc And I recognize that the father's role is a very important, pivotal role in the children's lives.

KING: Now he lived in Malibu. You lived on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. So it was always bico either going there or he...

MARKS: We never lived together.

KING: He had to fly here or you flew there?

MARKS: I never -- I never flew to see him. He came to see me. He always came to see me. I did not the relationship.

KING: And he amassed a fortune, right? He's a multimillionaire. That's acknowledged?

MARKS: Yes.

KING: Now, what were his grounds for custody?

MARKS: That I had coached and made up the allegations of sexual abuse against him.

KING: Against him?

MARKS: But...

KING: And you lost that? In other words the judge in family court agreed with him?

MARKS: The family court agreed with him...

SHANAHAN: That's what's most troubling about this case. And that's why we believe it will not be upl Bridget made a good faith allegation of what she believed to be misconduct. She had a duty under N to report that.

If this decision stands, it will be a chilling effect on the country. Parents will not file good faith allegatic

KING: For fear of losing their children.

SHANAHAN: Exactly. Exactly. She -- again, the children reported it to her, a camp counselor, and als

KING: You believe they were abused?

MARKS: I do, and actually I have every reason to believe that something did happen. The children ca stories.

KING: When the judge announced his decision, what reason did he give?

SHANAHAN: The reason -- I believe she based it upon three special recommendations?

KING: It was she?

SHANAHAN: She, Judge Goldberg. There are court appointed fiduciaries. In this case, there was a p was appointed by the judge. We asked that he be taken off the case based upon something in his pe background, which we believed made him incapable of being a neutral psychiatrist.

He recommended custody to Mr. Aylsworth. The court appointed social workers also recommended c Aylsworth. Bridget had complained about their conduct. She had had numerous supervisors replacec they were biased against her.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

KING: Let me get a break here. As we mentioned at the start of the show, we invited Mr. Aylsworth to declined.

His lawyer provided this statement, quote, "all of the Aylsworth family love Amber and Scarlett very m feel that media exposure is in their best interest. Mr. Aylsworth fully supports and hopes that the child healthy relationship with their mother." Unquote.

We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: What do you feel like you could do now?

MARKS: Fight, fight like a warrior for my daughters. From these animals (UNINTELLIGIBLE).

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KING: We're back with Bridget Marks and her incredible story. Since we taped this interview with her, some news in the case.

Bridget was reunited with her twin daughters on July 1. Back when we spoke I asked Bridget's attorney were the case stood.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

SHANAHAN: Well, at this point I spoke with the judge earlier today...

KING: The appeal judge?

SHANAHAN: No, this is the family court judge. She issued an interim order without explaining her fin: transferring the children. So we have been unable to pursue an appeal, either in state court or state - federal court.

KING: You mean it's limbo.

SHANAHAN: We're in limbo. So the children will be back in New York City soon. They'll be back with hope, for the period of a week. And we'd like...

KING: Is this in the court order?

SHANAHAN: Yes, that is in the existing order.

KING: So she has visitation?

SHANAHAN: At this point, it's only been decided for a one-week period of time.

KING: Why an interim order and not a final order?

SHANAHAN: You would have to ask Judge Goldberg.

KING: Did she tell you why?

SHANAHAN: She has not explained why.

KING: Your children are in Malibu?

MARKS: Yes.

KING: With him? With their non-mother and their biological father. Do you talk to them?

MARKS: I do talk to them.

KING: What's it like for you?

MARKS: Gosh, I miss them more than I could ever imagine. It's been devastating. And to hear their li And they say, "Mommy, we're counting the days until we come home."

KING: When do they come?

MARKS: They say, "When are we coming home?"

And I say, "I don't know."

KING: When do they come?

MARKS: I don't know.

KING: Is there a date set for this week?

MARKS: No.

KING: Why can't they arrange that? SHANAHAN: That will be worked out amongst the attorneys and assistance. But we still do not have a date certain, if you will, for the children to come back.

He's now established an apartment here in New York. He has a home in Malibu, where his wife lives. asked the court -- you know, to have him establish a residence here. Make sure that -- he had testifie going to leave his employment in St. Louis.

KING: Did the wife at all testify?

MARKS: She did. She did, actually. And the Aylsworths testified in court that they were a stable famil

SHANAHAN: You actually forgot to point out that there was a divorce petition.

MARKS: Oh, yes. And there was a divorce petition.

KING: Between them?

SHANAHAN: Which we subsequently found out.

MARKS: And then she said that his philandering only impacted his ability to be a good husband and i custodial parent.

But the stability of the Aylsworth family was what was relied upon by the forensic psychiatrist and the for me, it's just a sham.

KING: It's very confusing. Did the court, do you think, not believe you?

Did they think you were making a reckless charge against someone who hurt you, who you were tick therefore dragged him into court to embarrass him?

MARKS: He dragged me into court. I didn't sue him for anything. And I believe that the judge had a p conclusion, and that any facts that did not fit that conclusion were ignored.

And that would -- and they were ignored by the law guardian. .

SHANAHAN: But even if that was true, what's happened here is the best interests of these children has been completely disregarded.

This is the only parent, custodial parent, they've ever had since they were children. They've been taken home they've ever known. And again, we think that if the judge intended to punish Bridget, she's acting against the best interests of these children.

KING: What happened the day they left? Did he come and get them?

MARKS: Well, actually, he went to court in the morning to get what's called a supervised transfer, because he wanted to come and...

KING: To your place?

MARKS: ... to -- to my place.

KING: So someone came and took them?

MARKS: No. I said that if he wanted to take them, that he needed to come himself, that I was not going to hand over my children over to perfect strangers. We asked them to come down into the garage of the building, because that was the only place where the media which was outside. And he refused to do that.

Then it was suggested that I should take the children out of the building, through all the media, hail a limousine, kind of like a James Bond movie, for them to give me an undisclosed location, which would have been just like the one that had killed Princess Diana.

KING: So how did they eventually get turned over?

MARKS: He came and -- he came, and the supervisors came. And they were let out of the -- we were in the building. And...

KING: How did the kids react?

MARKS: We were hysterical. I mean, it was -- I mean, that's what it looks like when mothers lose their children.

KING: Tom, you are a constitutional lawyer, right?

SHANAHAN: Right. Civil rights attorney.

KING: Is this a constitutional matter? I thought these are state matters.

SHANAHAN: Well, that's why we went to federal court. The United States Constitution...

KING: Usually doesn't get involved in marital.

SHANAHAN: They do on occasions, because the parental relationship with a child is a fundamental right guaranteed by the United States Constitution.

And we're in federal court because we're going to challenge the way New York state courts appoint trial judges and appoint people who make decisions about custody of children based upon a flawed process. The current system of supervision. It just doesn't work.

KING: Why do you think, based on the story we've heard, the court had it in for your client?

SHANAHAN: We can...

KING: It doesn't make sense. SHANAHAN: I was not the trial attorney. And we respect Judge Goldberg's decision with her decision.

KING: What did the trial attorney think?

SHANAHAN: Well, my point of view and our point of view is that we have a judge that had sat for the rest of her career in the criminal courts, who was transferred to the family courts because the dockets were backlogged, in essence, as a criminal court judge would, punishing someone who she doesn't believe. I mean, obviously, she weighed the credibility of the parties, and she disregarded the witnesses for Bridget. A

know, does not believe Bridget.

KING: Just didn't believe Bridget and as in criminal court, you don't believe...

SHANAHAN: I think that her decision was based, for a large part, on flawed reports submitted by the case, who should have been disqualified from our point of view, by court appointed supervisors who... And then, you know, they were biased towards her.

KING: Was the media kind to you?

MARKS: I think the media has been the -- really the only saving grace. I believe that the children would be removed from me to California, and right now I believe that they would be seeking to terminate my visitation. And that the media is keeping close watch on the situation.

KING: Where are they right now?

MARKS: I don't know.

KING: You don't know?

MARKS: I don't know.

KING: When they call you, you don't know where they're at?

MARKS: No. I am -- I am -- I have to call a supervisor, and I'm not allowed to tape the phone calls at

SHANAHAN: The supervisor's on the phone listening to the entire conversation.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

KING: Let me get a break here. As we mentioned at the start of the show, we invited Mr. Aylsworth to... declined.

His lawyer provided this statement, quote, "all of the Aylsworth family love Amber and Scarlett very much and we feel that media exposure is in their best interest. Mr. Aylsworth fully supports and hopes that the child has a healthy relationship with their mother." Unquote.

We'll be right back.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: My daughter is a fit mother as the judge has stated. And we are going to fight to the Supreme Court if we have to. This is not how you treat children, this is not how you treat mothers.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We're back. Bridget, how do you support yourself? How do you pay legal bills? How much are

MARKS: I don't even want to count how much. Just astronomical sums.

KING: How do you pay them?

MARKS: Well, I got a lot of help from my family. My fiance's been very helpful.

KING: Are you going to get married?

MARKS: We don't know at this point. Life has just been so difficult that it's impossible to say.

KING: Do you earn a living? Do you do anything?

MARKS: Yes. Actually, I have a romance novel called "September" that's due in book stores in about

KING: Wow. Based it all on a personal thing?

MARKS: No. Actually, it's a romance between a terrorist and a middle-aged socialite. So it has absolute

with this.

KING: Did you ask Hugh Hefner for any help?

MARKS: No. But actually...

KING: He's a generous guy.

MARKS: "Playboy" is -- the "Playboy" Playmates, I understand, are very up in arms about this, espec are moms. And as rightfully they should be.

KING: Were you a Playmate?

MARKS: No, I wasn't. I was a feature.

KING: A feature?

MARKS: Yes.

KING: Now, who pays for the, like, supervision now? You pay? Who pays?

MARKS: That's a good question.

KING: Someone has to pay the supervisor, right?

SHANAHAN: That has not been determined, and at this point, the judge has order -- is considering o supervised visitation. Whenever Bridget's with the children someone will live in the house.

KING: What is the fear of Bridget with her children? That the mother needs supervision?

SHANAHAN: Again, these children are happy. She's never been declared an unfit mother.

KING: So what -- what is the supervision?

SHANAHAN: I don't -- I don't know. To have somebody live in the house...

KING: Did he ever charge you with treating them poorly?

SHANAHAN: She's never been declared an unfit mother. All the testimony indicates the children have intelligence, happy, in school, have friends, are socially functioning above where they should be. And know, we believe when we get to the appellate division, when the final order of Judge Goldberg is iss a stay.

Larry, how is she going to pay \$5,500 a week to visit with her children going forward? In essence, the parental right because she can't afford to be with her own children.

KING: There's one essential question. Why doesn't she have her own children? Right? And the answ would give is?

SHANAHAN: The answer the court would give is that she made untrue allegations of sexual abuse. 1 untrue. They were good faith allegations.

KING: They were good faith allegations?

SHANAHAN: She had a duty to report under the laws of this state.

KING: Let's say she felt they were true, right? So that's the reason to take the children away?

SHANAHAN: If the judge felt they were true?

KING: If the judge felt they were untrue.

SHANAHAN: If they were untrue? KING: That is a bone fide reason to...

SHANAHAN: This is the first case where that has happened. Every case the judge cited in her decisi parent who parentally kidnapped the children, took them to other jurisdictions, violated the existing cc the first time a judge has been so forceful in applying this type of...

KING: We had a famous case in Washington, Dr. Elizabeth Morgan, a very famous plastic surgeon, who graduated Harvard. And she charged her husband, who was a dentist, with doing things to the children.

The court, in a similar kind of -- awarded joint custody, didn't believe her. And she took the child to New York. He can't get him back. She just left. Do you ever think of doing that? Just going away?

MARKS: No, never. I believe that the legal system will correct itself. I believe that I am the victim of a process that believe that the process was biased and prejudiced. But I do believe that someone -- or the people that are of the appellate court -- will have the courage to stay this wrong decision and return the children to their parents.

KING: Has Mr. Aylsworth appeared anywhere in public to discuss this?

SHANAHAN: Not that I know of.

KING: Do you know of any? He declined to appear here. We invited him.

MARKS: He has declined to appear because he knows this isn't right.

KING: What do you make of Mrs. Aylsworth? Why does she want two children that are not hers?

MARKS: You know, I write for a living, and I can't even think of a Hollywood movie that this has ever been. So I don't even want to go there.

SHANAHAN: It's surreal.

KING: Did she make any statement in courts? I mean, she has to take care of these kids. They come with a responsibility.

MARKS: She said that she would support -- you know, support John and help to care for the children.

KING: This is a bad movie.

MARKS: It's not even a bad movie. My writing agent told me that if I submitted this to him in a script, that he would tell me I was out of my mind, that it was over the top. KING: I guess the most puzzling part of that is that you would continue to live with him after the twins were born.

MARKS: That's a good question. I wish I could answer that.

KING: Physical attraction? That's the bet.

MARKS: Well, I forgave him. And...

KING: You believed he might some day leave?

MARKS: You know, after he came back it became very apparent very quickly that things would not work. He was seeking to end the relationship.

KING: Where do we stand now, Tom, right at this minute? Where are we?

SHANAHAN: Again, we're waiting for the judge to issue the final decision so we can go back in and see what happens. As soon as that decision is issued, we'll go in for the stay. We believe we will get the stay in the appellate court. The case will be sent back down eventually after this decision is overturned.

KING: To another judge?

SHANAHAN: To another judge. We'll be asking Judge Goldberg at some point to recuse herself.

KING: And give me a time frame.

SHANAHAN: Within the next week or two.

KING: Really?

SHANAHAN: Yes.

KING: We're heading that close?

SHANAHAN: Yes.

KING: Good luck.

MARKS: Thank you, Larry.

KING: I'll try to figure it out. Thank you.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

KING: Our guests have been Bridget Marks and her attorney Tom Shanahan. Again, we invited Mr. A attorney to take part and they declined. And since we taped the interview there have been developm The twins were reunited with their mother on July 1. And the case is expected back in court very soon moment with another lady with an incredible story straight out of the tabloids. Country star Lorrie Mor tuned. (COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Before we talk to the beautiful and talented Lorrie Morgan, this just in. Washington's CNN and correspondents John King and Dana Bash. Barring a last-minute hitch, Democratic presidential candi plans to announce his choice for a running mate tomorrow morning, Tuesday morning at a rally in do Pittsburgh. Several Democratic sources close to the campaign tell CNN.

In an unusual wrinkle, designed to protect the secrecy of the process, Senator Kerry's choice is not s the announcement rally, the sources say. The sources caution that Senator Kerry could decide to del one said the directions are to go forward with the rollout plan Tuesday morning.

More details at the top of the hour with Anderson Cooper on "NEWSNIGHT." And Senator Kerry and special guests for the hour in New York this Thursday night, July 8. Senator Kerry and his wife, this T New York.

We now welcome country music star Lorrie Morgan. Her 12th album "Show Me How" was released e You got any thoughts on the Bridget Marks story?

LORRIE MORGAN, COUNTRY MUSIC SINGER: I do. I'm very sad about that. I mean, I couldn't ima having someone take my children away with me and then go live with a man that they don't even kno I'm behind her 100 percent.

KING: You understand the law though? Because they're trying to prevent people from making false c

MORGAN: I understand that. And again I think there's pros and cons to that, because it's going to stc from coming forward with really legitimate accusations.

KING: They'll hesitate to do it.

MORGAN: Exactly.

KING: How do you -- you've had a hectic life, right?

MORGAN: I have. And still am having one.

KING: How do you explain that? How do you explain you to you? I mean not only the marriages but ti the divorces and violence, and still having a successful career and all that jumbled into one?

MORGAN: Well, how do I explain it to me?

KING: Yes. When you look at yourself.

MORGAN: When I look at myself I just think that I'm destined for a whirlwind kind of life. And I accept not one to sit back and just take things calmly, you know, calm bothers me. And for some reason the something exciting in my life.

KING: You're an activist? A risk taker?

MORGAN: A risk taker.

KING: In other words, you like the drama?