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Nancy Garrido: participant or victim in Jaycee Dugard case?

Husband Phillip Garrido was ordered held on \$30 million bail Monday. Nancy's lawyer may suggest she was a battered woman.

By Michael B. Farrell | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

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Phillip Garrido and his wife, Nancy, are seen during a bail hearing at the El Dorado County Superior Court in Placerville, Calif. on Monday.

RICH PEDRONCELLI / AP

SAN FRANCISCO - The portrait that has emerged of Nancy Garrido is, in many respects, strikingly different from that of her husband.

The two were arrested Aug. 26 on charges of kidnapping Jaycee Lee Dugard in 1991. Phillip Garrido has a history of drug abuse and was twice arrested on charges of rape, though convicted only once, in 1976.

His wife, on the other hand, has been described as a passive yet caring woman who worked as a nursing assistant. She looked after her husband's elderly mother in their Antioch, Calif., home. Her acquaintances and relatives have called a "hermit" and "robot" who lived in the shadows and under the thumb of a controlling husband.

It's this portrayal – albeit one that is far from fully developed – that has led many to ask whether Ms. Garrido was a willing participant in Ms. Dugard's abduction, as police have charged, or another victim in this case, as her defense attorney may well argue.

"It sounds to me like [her lawyer is] trying to raise a claim that she is like a battered woman.... Like a [Charles] Manson follower who sort of robotically followed the orders of the dominant male," says Bennett Gershman, a professor of law at Pace Law School in New York and former defense attorney.

The problem is "that it has been 18 years" since Dugard was kidnapped and it will be difficult for any lawyer to prove that during that time Nancy didn't have many opportunities to set the young woman free, Professor Gershman says.

In a brief Monday morning hearing, a California judge set Mr. Garrido's bail at \$30 million, and he's been ordered to undergo a psychiatric evaluation. But since Phillip is a convicted sex offender on lifetime parole, he can also be held without bail. Nancy was ordered held without bail. The two defendants face a total of 29 counts of rape and kidnapping.

During their 10-minute appearance, Nancy and Phillip sat quietly with their respective attorneys in an El Dorado County courtroom filled with reporters.

Her lawyer, Gilbert Maines, has painted a picture of a woman who is going through a "horrendous" experience and misses Dugard and her two children, who police say Phillip fathered during Dugard's captivity.

"There came a time when she felt they were a family, and she loved the girls very much, and she loved Jaycee very much," Mr. Maines said in [an interview with the "Today" show on NBC](#).

He has also said that he will probably argue that her "mental condition at the time" may have influenced the course of events.

Experts say there have certainly been cases in which abused women have been [coerced into committing crimes](#), and Phillip's former wife told the media she was abused by her ex-husband.

"Sometimes psychological abuse can be as noxious as physical abuse," says Gershman.

Still, police believe that Nancy was an equal participant in this crime. Dugard's stepfather has even said that Nancy was the one who physically grabbed young Jaycee on the day of her abduction.

According to police, Nancy is believed to have been Dugard's primary captor during a time in 1993 when her husband returned to jail on a parole violation.

Nancy first met Phillip while he was serving time on the 1976 rape conviction in Leavenworth, Kan. According to media reports, the two corresponded for a time and then married in 1981.

When they settled in Antioch, she helped Phillip with his printing business but remained largely out of sight where she is believed to have helped raise Dugard's two children.

Now, Maines told the "Today" show, that "she's distraught. She's scared. She seems to be a little lost."
