

Diminished Capacity: Can the FDA Assure the Safety and Security of the Nation's Food Supply?

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

9:30 a.m. in room 2123 Rayburn House Office Building

Testimony by Terri Marshall – daughter-in-law of Mora Lou Marshall

The purpose of my testimony here today is to tell the story of what happened to my mother-in-law, Mora Lou Marshall, after she ate Peter Pan peanut butter contaminated with the Tennessee strain of Salmonella.

Our story is a simple one, yet it is also very complex. It seems as though our lives are now segmented into two time periods: life before the peanut butter and life after the peanut butter.

First, I will briefly describe our lives before the peanut butter. My 85 year old mother-in-law moved in with our family in November of 2006. At that time, Mora Lou was able to do very basic things like make her bed, shower and dress on her own, prepare her breakfast, read the newspaper, or flip through magazines. She went to the beauty shop once a week, and was able to ride in the car to go to the doctor or dentist for her appointments.

She also enjoyed walking through the yard, coming to the table for dinner, or even going out for a meal as a treat. It was not unusual for Mora Lou to help with light household duties like dusting, folding clothes, and loading the dishwasher. She kept in touch with her Little Rock friends and family by visiting with them on the phone, or reading their many cards and letters.

Mora Lou kept a jar of Peter Pan Plus peanut butter on the nightstand in her room. She would eat a spoonful or two several times during the day or night to

supplement her nutrition. The reality is the very food she thought would improve her health began to ravage her body.

On January 2, 2007, we entered our life after the peanut butter. Mora Lou had severe vomiting, diarrhea and pain. We called an ambulance to transport her to the hospital because she was so weak we could not get her in the car. That was the last time she was at home.

We first heard the news of the Peter Pan recall in mid-February. My husband went to the nursing home where Mora Lou had been living to check her peanut butter. And yes, our worst fears were realized because the numbers matched the recall. And then another fear struck us. We knew she had been eating the contaminated peanut butter while in the hospital and at the nursing home.

The next week a representative from the local office of the Department of Health called with the news that Mora Lou's lab report from January 3, 2007, tested positive for Salmonella Tennessee. It was then the pieces to the puzzle began to fall into place. Mora Lou was on a vicious cycle of salmonella poisoning up until the recall.

We are now in a more advanced stage of life after Peter Pan. It seems Mora Lou has literally lost her life without physically dying. She has been either hospitalized or in the nursing home since January 2, 2007. She cannot walk, get out of bed, use the bathroom, shower, read the newspaper, or talk on the telephone. All aspects of her former life are gone. Her nutrition is now supplied from a feeding tube. She cannot swallow even pureed foods or water without aspirating most of the time.

The testimony I have given today is a very brief overview of what our entire family has experienced this year. We will forever be changed in how we purchase, prepare and trust whether the food we are buying is safe for us to eat.

It would take more time than I am allowed in this forum to fully explain our challenges, so I will close with one final comment.

The topic for this hearing is “Diminished Capacity: Can the FDA Assure the Safety and Security of the Nation’s Food Supply?” If I could change it to relate to our personal experience, it would read: “Mora Lou’s Complete Incapacity: Can anyone prevent it from happening to someone else?”

Thank you.