

## 2 motherless children brighten somber trial

By John R. Ellement

GLOBE STAFF

Wearing a white dress with green piping, Alexandria Petrie yesterday briefly brightened the somber mood of the Boston medical malpractice trial stemming from her mother's death at Newton-Wellesley Hospital in 1997.

Alexandrea, who turns 9 tomorrow, Mother's Day, drew gentle chuckles from jurors and her family during the five minutes she testified in Suffolk Superior Court, where her father, Mark, is suing two doctors.

Speaking in a light voice, Mark Petrie's attorney, Frederic N. Halstrom addressed her: Your father says, "You pretty much run the show.... Is that true?"

The third-grader paused briefly, then said, "hmmm," triggering the chuckles.

Charlotte Petrie was 27 years old and had delivered Alexandria by cesarean section at the Newton hospital where Mark Petrie then worked as a respiratory therapist. During recovery, Charlotte Petrie's heart stopped, causing irreversible brain damage. She was removed from life support three days later.

Mark Petrie contends two doctors, Dr. Susan Arnold-Aldea, an obstetrician-gynecologist, and Dr. Paul R. Satwicz, an anesthesiologist, gave his wife an overdose of morphine and then did not pro-vide an antidote in time to save

her. Attorneys for the doctors have said she received proper care and died from an undiagnosed heart arrhythmia.

Alexandrea and her older brother, Cameron, 11, who followed her onto the stand, were both asked to name any woman who has stepped in to help since the death of their mother.

Both said their grandmother helps, as do the mothers of their "best friends" in Queensbury, N.Y., located about an hour north of Albany, where they now live.

Cameron got a louder laugh than his sister when Halstrom asked the fifth-grader what his favorite subject was, "besides recess"?

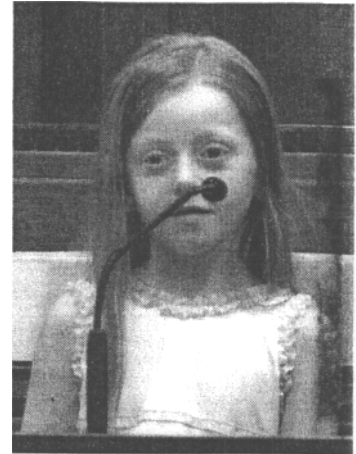
"Gym," Cameron Petrie quickly responded.

Cameron, who was about 2 when his mother died, described how he and his mother would put items on her belly during the pregnancy. "We would watch it move when Lexi [Alexandrea] would kick it," he said.

Attorneys for the defendants did not cross-examine the children.

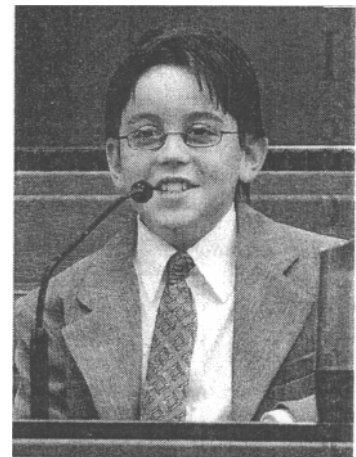
Charlotte Petrie died the same week as Tamara Barry, a 34-yearold woman who had delivered a stillborn baby at Newton-Wellesley.

The maternal deaths triggered a state Department of Public Health investigation that found the hospital failed to meet federal



PHOTOS BY GEORGE RIZER/GLOBE STAFF

**Alexandrea and Cameron Petrie testified yesterday at Suffolk Superior Court in the wrongful death suit involving their mother, Charlotte.**



standards in staffing and quality assurance, although investigators credited the hospital for taking prompt steps to correct that.

The trial, before Superior Court Judge John Cratsley, is expected to last at least another week.

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