

Wednesday, January 21, 2004

TRIALS
TRIAL REPORT

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Prosecution shows video of shooting to rapt courtroom



Security cameras captured Brazill as he waved his gun in the school hallway (Court TV photo).

By Sam Handlin
 Court TV

WEST PALM BEACH (Court TV) — A rapt jury watched Nathaniel Brazill shoot Barry Grunow over and over again. Although the young boy fired one bullet into the head of his seventh grade English teacher, a surveillance tape of the killing was played over and over to a hushed and dimly illuminated courtroom on the second full day of testimony in the boy's murder trial.

"His hands are directly out, approximately at eye level, his left shoulder slightly in front of his right shoulder," narrated prosecution witness Grant Fredericks, an instructor at the FBI academy for forensic video technology, describing Brazill, 14, pointing a gun at Grunow. "Now he's stepping back, the hands are coming down, and (Grunow) has collapsed to the floor."



Brazill in the hallway at the time of the shooting

The security camera that captured the footage was located 53 feet from the classroom doorway in which Brazill, an honor student without any history of violence or other discipline problems, shot one of his favorite teachers. The tape does not show much detail, though some images were enlarged to give jurors a better view. Cameras around the school only captured Brazill for about 75 seconds, but Fredericks spent more than an hour on the stand explaining various video segments, rerunning clips and answering Shiner's questions about how the surveillance system worked.

After hearing testimony from a host of witnesses Tuesday who saw the shooting or were on the scene soon afterward, the jury seemed very interested in watching the incident themselves, even if the footage

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video

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Today's Trial Coverage

9am-5pm ET/PT:
MA v Leahy - Rapist On Trial For Murder

EVENING HIGHLIGHTS

Catherine Crier LIVE

• **5:00pm:** - Kobe Bryant case

I, Detective

8:00pm: Police discover how a little lie led to murder

I, Detective

8:30pm: A firebombed house leads to an even deeper mystery

Forensic Files

9:00pm: Was the death of a retired police officer suicide or murder?

North Mission Road

9:30pm: Investigators from the LA Coroner's solve a very curious mystery

Dominick Dunne

10:00pm: Why would Ruthann Aron, millionaire and former political candidate, risk it all for a murder-for-hire scheme?

*All times ET/PT

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was not entirely clear. Judge Richard Wennet was about to dismiss Fredericks when several jurors asked to see portions of the tape again. One Hispanic man wanted to see the entire incident in real-time without any commentary. A white woman was interested in timing how long Brazill and Grunow conversed before the boy pulled his gun.



Grunow on the floor following the shooting

The incident occurred on May 26, 2000, the last day of school before summer vacation. Brazill, only 13 at the time of the shooting, is being tried in adult court for first-degree murder and faces life in prison without parole if convicted.

The decision to try Brazill as an adult has angered many observers and child advocates.

During lunchtime, a coalition of groups opposed to processing juveniles in the adult court system protested outside the Palm Beach County courthouse.

"What is wrong with our children, and who is concerned with the real causes?" asked one speaker from the Nation of Islam.

The defendant was sent home early from school the day of the shooting for throwing water balloons. Infatuated with classmate Dinora Rosales, Brazill returned to school with a gun and demanded that Grunow release her from his class so that he could say goodbye before parting for the summer. When the teacher refused, the boy drew his weapon and fired. The prosecution claims that the boy shot his teacher in cold blood. The defense maintains that a lovesick Brazill was trying to scare Grunow into agreeing to let Rosales go when the gun went off accidentally.

Brazill is also charged with one count of aggravated assault for pointing the gun at another teacher, John James, as he fled the scene. This interaction occurred much closer to the surveillance camera, and jurors were able to vividly see the young boy running down the hallway and holding out his gun.

"I saw Nate standing there, and he said 'Don't bother me, Mr. James' and I immediately turned around and took the kids back into the classroom," the math teacher recalled on the stand.

James' testimony contradicted remarks the prosecutor had made during his opening statements. Shiner claimed Brazill had said, "Get back or I'll shoot you too" to the stunned teacher.

But a classmate of the defendant who was in the hall during the incident, and is also captured on the surveillance tape, recalled Brazill's words differently from James.

Eneyda Euceda testified Thursday that Brazill, who sounded "scared but at the same time mad," instead said, "I'm going to shoot you, Mr. James. I'm not lying.

É I'm going to shoot."

On cross-examination, defense lawyer Robert Udell tried hard to poke holes in Euceda's allegations, upsetting the young witness. After pointing out an inconsistency between another aspect of Euceda's testimony and a statement the 14-year-old gave to police after the shooting, Udell raised his voice and asked her, "Which is the truth?"

"I'm nervous, mister," she replied before affirming that her testimony was drawn from her best recollections of the incident.

The surveillance video wasn't the only powerful visual evidence introduced during a busy day of testimony from nine witnesses. Investigator Ralph Rinaldi, who collected evidence and took pictures of the crime scene, also took the stand.

Shiner introduced several photographs into evidence and displayed them on a large easel in the middle of the courtroom. One picture, taken from about 15 feet away, showed Grunow splayed on the floor, his arms extended and his brown hair streaked with blood.

While the jury stared stony-faced at the gruesome image, Brazill began to cry and turned his chair to the wall.

Grunow's elderly mother, dressed in a white shirt and blue jacket adorned with a pin of a butterfly, also swiveled her body and gazed away until the picture of her dead son was removed.

The first witness of the day, Brandon "Big B" Spann, a heavy-set 19-year-old from Brazill's neighborhood, buttressed the prosecution's contention that the murder was premeditated.

"He asked me did I have a gun," the teen recalled of an interaction he had with Brazill before the shooting. "He said he was going to f**k up the school ... I thought he was playing."

Spann did not give Brazill a gun, but the boy has admitted stealing one days before from an elderly family friend who he called "Grandpa."

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