

[Click to Print](#)[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Teenager: 'Brought closer to God' by sniper shooting

Malvo's lawyers ask judge to drop terrorism charge

VIRGINIA BEACH, Virginia (CNN) --A 14-year-old Maryland boy who was shot and nearly killed by a sniper last fall told a packed courtroom Wednesday that the terrifying experience "brought me closer to God."

Iran Brown, who was 13 when he was shot in front of Benjamin Tasker Middle School in Bowie, testified in the murder trial of John Allen Muhammad, whom police and prosecutors say was one of two men responsible for sniper attacks last October.

"When I got to the school, I opened the door (to the car), and I got out, and I put my book bag down and I got shot," Brown said, describing the October 7, 2002, shooting.

Muhammad and fellow sniper suspect Lee Boyd Malvo have been accused of shooting 19 people, killing 13 and wounding six in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C. Malvo goes on trial next month.

The 42-year-old Muhammad is being tried on a murder charge for the death of Dean Meyers, 53, outside a Manassas, Virginia, service station. He has pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutors are presenting evidence linking him to numerous other killings. They have to prove multiple murders to obtain a capital murder conviction on one of the two death penalty charges against Muhammad.

The doctor who performed emergency surgery on Brown also took the stand Wednesday to describe the massive injuries inflicted on the boy by a high-

powered rifle.

Dr. Martin Eichelberger said Brown's liver was "shattered" and he sustained injuries to his lung, spleen, pancreas and diaphragm. Quick thinking by his aunt, who rushed him to a nearby clinic after the shooting, and quick action at both the clinic and the hospital where he was taken were critical to his survival, the doctor said.

"There's got to be some luck involved, and this boy had the good Lord riding on his shoulder that day," Eichelberger said. "He was a tough young man. He was an outstanding patient."

Brown's testimony came after his mother dropped a motion to keep him from testifying. Her attorney, Steve Frucci, said she was trying to keep him off the stand because the boy was "terrified" of being in the same room as Muhammad.

But she relented after being told by prosecutors that letting Brown testify via closed-circuit television was not an option. Muhammad's defense attorneys decided not to cross-examine the boy.

Witnesses place car at scene of shootings

In other testimony Wednesday, two witnesses put a Chevrolet Caprice -- in which Muhammad and his alleged accomplice Malvo were captured -- at the scenes of two of the sniper shootings.

Earlier in the trial, a New Jersey man testified that he sold the car to Muhammad a month before the sniper slayings began and that a hole had been drilled in the trunk. Prosecutors contend the car was used as a platform for the slayings, with one suspect shooting from the trunk and the second behind the wheel for a quick getaway.

Christine Ann Goodwin said she saw an old Caprice with peeling paint and New Jersey license plates parked at an Exxon station in Fredericksburg, Virginia, on the morning of October 11, 2002 -- about two hours before Kenneth Bridges was shot and killed at the gas station.

Goodwin, who was eight months pregnant at the time, said she was nervous about stopping to get gas because of the publicity about the sniper shootings. When she saw the car, she was unnerved by it and "a lot of flags went off."

"Everything about it was wrong," she said. "Something in me just felt that the car was very threatening to me. My first instinct was to call by the police, but I didn't."

Goodwin said after she drove to work and heard about Bridges' shooting, she

contacted police about the car.

When prosecutors showed her a photograph of Muhammad's car and asked her if it was the car she saw before Bridges' shooting, she said, "I'm a hundred percent certain."

Another witness, retiree Alex Jones, said he was outside a Michael's crafts store in Fredericksburg on October 4, 2002, when he heard a gunshot and saw a woman, Caroline Seawell, fall.

After he approached Seawell, who told him she had been shot, Jones said he got back in his car and left to get help, "zigzagging" through the parking lot and telling his wife, who was in the back seat, to duck.

"I was concerned whoever did what they did would put a bullet in my head," Jones said.

As he drove through the parking lot, Jones said he got behind a dirty old Chevrolet with New Jersey license plates. He said the car frightened him because its windows were covered.

"At that point, I wanted to get away from that car," he said. He said he later mentioned the car to investigators.

Shown a photograph of Muhammad's car by prosecutors, Jones identified it as the car he saw that day. But under questioning by defense attorneys, he said he was only "80 percent" certain it was the same car.

Seawell survived the shooting.

Muhammad's trial resumes Thursday morning.

Charges of a tainted jury

Also Wednesday, in nearby Chesapeake, Virginia, attorneys for Malvo asked a judge to drop the terrorism charge against him before his trial.

In a four-page motion, Malvo's attorneys said the judge's decision to move the trial to Chesapeake from the Washington, D.C. area, supported their argument that the grand jury that indicted Malvo was unfair.

In July, Fairfax County Circuit Judge Jane Marum Roush said she wanted to move the trial because many people in the Washington, D.C. area "lived in fear during the month of October 2002 as a result of the crimes with which the defendant is charged."

Malvo's motion argues that the grand jury that indicted Malvo -- like the pool of jurors that would have heard his case in northern Virginia had the trial not been moved -- also was tainted.

"Since a competent jury could not be seated to hear this case in July of 2003 (when Judge Roush decided to move the trial), it must be concluded that the grand jury which returned the indictment" was also not competent to hear the case, the motion stated.

The terrorism charge is one of two charges Malvo faces that carry a possible death penalty. Malvo is also charged with murder.

His trial is scheduled to begin November 10.

CNN correspondent Jeanne Meserve and producer Mike Ahlers contributed to this report.