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*From the Baltimore Sun*

## **List of five schools in Balto. Co. found in Muhammad's car**

### **Boy shot in Bowie testifies at sniper suspect's trial; 'It brought me closer to God'**

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October 30, 2003

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. - The names of five western Baltimore County schools were found scrawled on a slip of paper in John Allen Muhammad's Chevrolet Caprice - a haunting finding that prosecutors revealed yesterday after a 14-year-old boy testified about how a sniper shot him outside a Bowie school last fall.

Muhammad was stopped by a police officer in Baltimore on Oct. 8 last year, one day after the Bowie shooting. It is unclear what he and his alleged accomplice, Lee Boyd Malvo, were doing in Baltimore, but prosecutors said the list of schools gives some clue.

"This validates that we weren't overreacting," said state schools Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick, referring to the widespread precautions taken to protect children during last year's sniper attacks. "It's more than chilling. I find it almost unbelievable, but today I don't think we can accept anything as unbelievable."

The schools written on the paper found in Muhammad's car were Campfield Early Childhood Center in the Lochearn area, Maiden Choice School for severely disabled children in Arbutus, Arbutus Elementary, Arbutus Middle and Catonsville Middle - all near major highways like other sniper targets. Addresses of some of the schools were included on the list.

Prosecutor James A. Willett said the sniper suspects' trip to Baltimore didn't appear significant to authorities "until we get to the day of the arrest on the 24th of October, when inside the Caprice they find a piece of paper with a list of schools in the Baltimore area - where they were the very next day from the [Bowie] shooting."

After Baltimore police Officer James Snyder testified yesterday about his brief contact with Muhammad on Oct. 8 last year, prosecutors handed him an evidence bag containing

a list of the five schools. Snyder is not the officer who recovered the list from the car at the time of Muhammad's arrest, but he was asked to identify the schools on the list to highlight the connection to Baltimore.

Muhammad is charged with two counts of capital murder in the killing of civil engineer Dean H. Meyers at a gas station in Manassas, Va., on Oct. 9. Evidence in other sniper shootings is being presented because prosecutors are attempting to show that the suspects were trying to extort \$10 million from the government by provoking fear throughout the region.

To gain the most impact from the list of Baltimore County schools, prosecutors brought it up in court moments after Iran Brown took the stand yesterday. Brown was shot outside Benjamin Tasker Middle School in Bowie on Oct. 7. He was 13 years old.

"When I got to the school, I opened the [car] door and walked out," said Brown, now 14. The lanky young man, wearing a white button-down shirt and black pants, spoke with little emotion. "I put my book bag down, and I got shot."

The prosecutor asked, "What did the gunshot do to you?" presumably a question about the physical impact. Brown replied: "It brought me closer to God."

Brown's aunt, Tanya Brown, drove him to school that morning because he had been eating candy on the bus the week before and wasn't allowed to ride it for three days. After he got out of her car, she slowly pulled away and then heard a loud noise and the anguished cry of her nephew.

"I heard him calling me," Tanya Brown testified. "He was saying, 'Aunt Tanya, Aunt Tanya.' I backed up, and when I asked him if he was OK, he told me he was shot."

She didn't believe him until she saw the hole in his shirt on the left side of his chest. A nurse at Children's National Medical Center, Tanya Brown decided he needed immediate help. She scooped him into her car and rushed, horn blaring, to nearby Bowie Health Center.

As she drove, she called 911. As the tape of that emotional call was played in the courtroom, Tanya Brown dabbed her eyes and nose with a tissue. As the ride to the hospital progressed, Iran Brown's condition seemed to deteriorate. Tanya Brown could be heard on the tape saying to him, "You're not going to die."

Later in the four-minute emergency call, Brown said to the dispatcher, "Oh my God. We've got to hurry up. ... Oh my goodness. Are you OK, Iran? He's still breathing, but he looks pale."

Willett asked Tanya Brown if her nephew had said anything to her on the ride. "He told me that he loved me," she said.

Iran Brown would be taken by helicopter from Bowie Health Center to Children's National Medical Center in Washington, where he underwent more than two hours of surgery and stayed for a month to recover. His spleen had to be removed.

"Other than that, are you OK?" Willett asked at the conclusion of Iran Brown's three-minute testimony. "Yes," he replied.

As he was excused from court, the young man sneaked a quick glance at Muhammad. As he walked out of the courtroom well and into the gallery, he grabbed his mother's arm. She led him and his aunt out of the courtroom. They did not stay to hear further testimony as other victims have.

Indeed, Iran Brown's family hired lawyers last week to quash a summons that he appear in court and testify for the prosecution. They filed a motion to keep Iran from testifying, but they abruptly withdrew the motion yesterday morning after receiving assurances from prosecutors that the questioning would be brief.

"His mother had concerns that he would be traumatized by being in the same room with Mr. Muhammad," said Steven Frucci, one of Brown's attorneys.

Jurors also heard yesterday of the painstaking search for evidence in the woods near the middle school. Hundreds of police cadets combed the woods, and two made an important find.

Troy Mason, now with the Montgomery County Park Police, said he trimmed back a bush near a clearing with a direct line of sight to the school entrance.

"I remember the leaves and roots, and my partner made one swipe with a rake, and I heard a ping," Mason said. "I looked down and, excuse my expression, I think I said 'Holy s-!' and there it was - a shell casing right at the base of our feet."

The casing was later linked to the .223-caliber Bushmaster rifle found in Muhammad's car when he and Malvo were arrested. Police also found in those woods a tarot card with Malvo's DNA on it and a Bic pen barrel with Muhammad's DNA.

The prosecution called two witnesses yesterday who said they saw Muhammad's Caprice near Brown's school the morning of the shooting. Roger Polk Jr. said he saw the Caprice outside his mother's home near the school the afternoon before the shooting and again in the morning. He said his mother told him to write down its license plate.

"She just had a little suspicion about it, and she said something's not right about that vehicle," Polk said.

She wasn't the only one to think that. A woman who saw the Caprice several days later at an Exxon station in Fredericksburg, Va., said she immediately felt uneasy about it. Christine Goodwin, a software engineer who was eight months pregnant at the time,

pulled into the Exxon at 7:15 a.m. Oct. 11.

"When I saw that car, I felt very uncomfortable," said Goodwin. "I had a lot of red flags going off. Everything about that car was wrong. That car was completely threatening to me. My first instinct was to call the police."

A prosecutor asked her why she didn't.

"Because they were looking for a white van," Goodwin said.

A woman who was eating breakfast at a waffle house next to the Exxon said she also saw the Caprice a little later that morning. Patricia Bradshaw said the car slowly drove past the Exxon and pulled into a Ramada parking lot directly across from the gas pump where, minutes later, Kenneth H. Bridges was shot.

Bradshaw said a man then ran into the waffle house and announced to the diners, "You better get down. I think a man's been shot." Everyone moved away from the windows, though Bradshaw later went outside to report the Caprice.

"When a man said the shots came from the Ramada," Bradshaw said, "I turned to my sister and said, 'Oh my God, that blue car. I have to tell somebody about that blue car.'"

Sun staff writer Del Quentin Wilber contributed to this report.

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