

# The Boston Globe

## Hit man reenacts slayings in court

[Connolly is cross-examined by defense](#)



By Shelley Murphy

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MIAMI - In an encounter that sent shivers through the court-room yesterday, hit man-turned-government witness John Martorano reenacted several of the 20 slayings he committed, as he

faced relentless cross-examination during the state murder trial of former FBI agent John J. Connolly Jr.

"Where is it you actually shot him?" defense attorney Manuel L. Casabielle asked repeatedly about the slayings, offering his own body for demonstration. "Be gentle."

Unfazed, the 67-year-old killer leaned over the witness stand and nonchalantly waved his hand over the slender lawyer's silver hair, indicating that he shot one victim over the ear, another in the back of the head, and one between the eyes.

"Did you look in his eyes?" asked Casabielle, referring to the 1981 slaying of Roger Wheeler, a Tulsa businessman who was ambushed as he got into his car after a round of golf.

"No," Martorano said.

"What were you thinking?" asked Casabielle, as the jurors' eyes riveted on the hit man.

"I wanted to get away with this," he answered.

"Did he seem surprised that he was going to die?" Casabielle asked.

"I think it was too fast," Martorano said.

A year later, Martorano recounted, he killed his good friend, Boston business consultant John B. Callahan, just as swiftly, with a bullet to the back of the head as he climbed into a van with Martorano in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

"How did you feel?" asked Casabielle, pointing out that this time the victim was a friend.

"I felt lousy," Martorano said. "I didn't want to kill a guy that I cared enough [about] to kill a guy for a year before."

The chilling testimony by Martorano, who cut a deal with the government that made him a free man last year after serving 12 years for 20 murders, came on his second day on the stand in Connolly's trial on murder charges in Callahan's killing.

The decorated agent, who retired from the FBI in 1990 after 22 years, is accused of leaking information to his longtime informants, James "Whitey" Bulger and Stephen "The Rifleman" Flemmi, that prompted them to recruit Martorano to kill Callahan.

Callahan's bullet-riddled body was found in the trunk of his Cadillac at Miami International Airport on Aug. 2, 1982.

There is no dispute that Connolly was not present at the slaying.

Martorano testified earlier that Callahan had asked him to kill Wheeler, who owned World Jai Alai, as part of a plot to take over the company.

Next, Martorano said he killed Callahan because Bulger and Flemmi told him that Connolly had warned them that Callahan was "going to fold" when questioned by the FBI about Wheeler's slaying and that "we're all going to end up in jail for the rest of our lives if he doesn't hold up."

When pressed by the defense, Martorano conceded that he never met Connolly and was taking Bulger's word that he wanted Callahan dead because of a tip from the agent.

"I felt I knew him," said Martorano, who teamed up with Bulger on killings and other crimes when they were members of Somerville's Winter Hill Gang in the 1970s and 1980s. "We were partners. We had committed a lot of crimes together. I felt he was a stand-up guy."

He said he was surprised when he learned in 1997 that Bulger and Flemmi were longtime FBI informants who had been providing information to Connolly for years.

"They kept their secret well," Martorano said.

Connolly is currently serving a 10-year prison term for his 2002 federal racketeering conviction in Boston for protecting Bulger and Flemmi from prosecution and warning them to flee before their 1995 indictment. Bulger, now wanted for 19 killings, has been a fugitive since and is on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted list, with a \$2 million reward being offered for his capture.

Martorano said he asked Bulger about a Boston Globe report in 1988 on the Bulger brothers that revealed for the first time that Bulger had a secret relationship with the FBI.

He said Bulger insisted it was not true, and the newspaper only ran it to cause trouble for his brother, William M. Bulger, the longtime president of the Massachusetts Senate.

"If you found out he was a rat, would you have killed him?" Casabielle asked about Whitey Bulger.

"Maybe," said Martorano.

"Possibly?" said Casabielle.

"Possibly," Martorano said.

"Probably?" Casabielle said. "Probably," Martorano agreed.

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