

[Home](#) | [About](#) | [The Big Story](#) | [Dispatches](#) | [Enterprises](#) | [Snapshots](#) |

"My Boy Frankie"

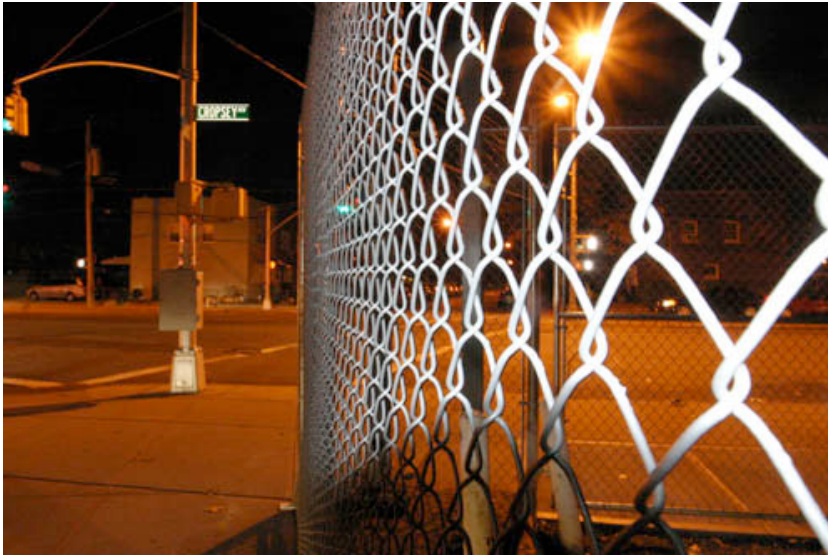
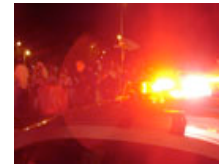


Photo: Mary Bowers
Crospey Avenue and Bay 48th Street, near where the shooting occurred

Related Stories:



The Ink Blotter

This week, the Brooklyn Ink takes a look at crime and the criminal justice

system in Kings County.

By *Mary Bowers*
November 28, 2007

As Bekim Muja, 20, was led out of the cells, his hands cuffed behind his back, his mother, Sabrina, wept. As his lawyer, David Levine, read a letter from his client to the judge, it became apparent to the driving offenders, shoplifters and tax evaders sitting in Part 40 of the Brooklyn Supreme Court waiting for their initial hearings, that this was no ordinary case.

"Frankie was my childhood friend," Levine read. "We laughed, joked, did everything together. Frankie was like the brother I never had." As Muja stood at the dock, tall, gaunt and still, his lawyer read on, "It is a living nightmare. I am unable to eat, sleep, drink. I would trade places with him if I could. I would do anything to bring him back."

On July 19, at approximately 1:53 a.m., Muja shot dead his childhood friend and closest confidante, Frank Rodgers McFadden, 20, with a pistol at a friend's house in Gravesend. They had been out for the evening; according to Muja, it had been "a day like any other." The two had been out drinking; Muja claimed he drank three or four shots of Hennessy brandy before they walked together to the house of a friend, Jonathan Linke.

It was on their way to Linke's house, Muja claimed, that the two discovered a pistol concealed beneath some bushes. When the two arrived at the house on Harway Avenue, they proceeded to pass the gun around. Within 10 or 20 minutes, they were joined by Muja's girlfriend, Samantha Seigel, and eight or nine other friends. As the party continued outside the house, Muja claims, McFadden asked him to pass the gun. As he did so, it went off, fatally wounding McFadden in the chest. Witnesses at the party later claimed the gun had been pointed at McFadden before the trigger was pulled.

As McFadden lay dying, Bekim frantically attempted to plug the wound with his hands. But the sound of police sirens terrified Muja and he ran two blocks away to the house where he lived with his parents on Shore Parkway, later telling police that he only believed McFadden to be unconscious when he left. McFadden was pronounced dead on arrival at Coney Island Hospital at approximately 2:20 a.m.

Muja claimed to be asleep when police came to arrest him for the murder of his friend about three hours later. When taken to the police precinct at Coney Island, a terrified Muja protested his innocence, claiming that he was "always being blamed for everything in the neighborhood," and insisting that he wasn't "a murderer." He denied having a gun and insisted that "Frankie" was "his boy."

Muja, a self-employed construction worker who earned \$350 a week, discovered simultaneously that his best friend was dead, that he killed him, and that he was now being arrested for murder.

He was taken to the Otis Bantum Correctional Center on Rikers Island, where he remained for nine days before being released on bail. The charges were changed to manslaughter in the second degree and possession of an illegal firearm. He pled guilty to both charges at the Brooklyn Supreme Court on Oct. 11.

Judge Martin P. Murphy, broad-shouldered in his black judge's gown, sitting below the ominous bronze words, "In God We Trust", relaxed his posture as he surveyed the unusually large group of Kosovar relatives and friends who gathered in rows behind Muja. Ten minutes before he appeared, they trooped through the door at the back of the court, swamping the benches. They looked anxious; one young girl bounced a baby on her lap. The baby waved his small hand towards Muja, who forced a smile over his shoulder in return.

Murphy dismissed the recommended sentence for manslaughter—insisting that it was non-violent—but enforced the five-year sentence for possession of an illegal weapon. Before doing so, he noted that there were "many tears in the audience." Muja's mother Sabrina wrung her hands and wept. In a single night only four months previously the son she had watched grow up in their Brooklyn neighborhood, a boy with no previous criminal record, inadvertently changed the course of his life. Standing before the judge, flanked by prison guards, Muja had not only lost his best friend, but his innocence in the eyes of the law, and five years of his future freedom; for a night that went suddenly, and fatally, wrong.

© Copyright 2007 Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism