

Officer testifies at bombing trial

'There was a ball of fire in my face and white smoke'

By Matthew Breilis
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The Boston police officer who survived a Roslindale bombing that killed his partner recalled the explosion yesterday while testifying at the trial of Milton engineer Alfred Trenkler - the man the government believes made the bomb.

"There was a ball of fire in my face and white smoke," said Francis X. Foley, recalling the Oct. 28, 1991 explosion that killed Jeremiah J. Hurley Jr.

Foley said he thought he was dying and he knew his partner was seriously wounded, but was amazed that Hurley had the presence of mind to tell people to stay away in case there was a secondary explosion.

Prosecutors are alleging that

Trenkler built the bomb for Thomas A. Shay, who then planted the bomb under his father's car in an effort to kill him, inherit money and avenge a childhood of abuse and neglect.

Foley said he and Hurley, members of the Boston Police Bomb Squad, responded to a call from Shay's father, Thomas L. Shay, of a suspicious device in the driveway of his Eastbourne Street home. Foley said they were not concerned about moving the device when they examined it because the elder Shay had told them he had moved it on at least two prior occasions. The bomb exploded while they were examining it.

The government rested after Foley's testimony. Defense attorney Terry Segal called several witnesses to testify that Trenkler, 37, was engaged in numerous business activities at the time of the bombing.

The younger Shay, who was sentenced last month to 16 years in prison, admitted in a 1992 television interview that he purchased a toggle switch that was used in the bomb at a Radio Shack 10 days before the bombing. That interview was played for the jury earlier this week.

The receipt from that purchase indicates Shay purchased the item shortly before 2:30 p.m. on Oct. 18, 1991.

Mark Rombelli, an accountant, testified yesterday that he met with Trenkler in Weymouth that day and that Trenkler left the meeting around 2 p.m. The defense is expected to argue that Rombelli's testimony shows that Trenkler could not have been with Shay when he bought the toggle switch.

The trial will resume Monday in US District Court in Boston.

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