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Title: MAN BEING TRIED IN FRIEND'S SLAYING.(News)

Date: October 28, 2004 **Publication:** The Cincinnati Post (Cincinnati, OH) **Author:** Perry, Kimball

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Because they were fast friends since age 10, it wasn't unusual for Djuan Bell to show up at Laurice Welch's house late at night asking for him.

That's what happened Dec. 11, but that time Welch, 20, didn't return to his Springfield Township home. His body was found early the next morning by garbage collectors -- with a bullet in the back of his head.

Bell, his best friend, went on trial Wednesday for aggravated murder, accused of killing his best friend for selling Bell's mother drugs.

"There was no motive for Mr. Bell to do anything to Mr. Welch," Bell's attorney, Clyde Bennett II, told Hamilton County jurors Wednesday.

Calling assertions that Welch was killed for selling drugs to Bell's mothers "rumors," Bennett attacked the dead man by saying Welch's drug-dealer was what got him killed.

"(Welch) was involved in activities that make him prone to being attacked," Bennett said.

Bell, 21, walked next door to Welch's home late in the evening of Dec. 11, assistant prosecutor Anne Flanagan told prosecutors. Bell innocently asked Welch if he could compare his gun to Welch's, Flanagan said, and when Bell got Welch's gun, he used it to shoot Welch in the back of the head and left his body on Springfield Township's Neptune Drive.

Then, Bell asked his friends to lie for him, she said.

"Djuan Bell asked them to tell police that he spent the night with them," Flanagan told jurors.

After the shooting, she added, Bell did some odd things that no innocent person would -- he threw away the coat and shoes he wore that night, put a gun in a plastic bag and hid it in a yard.

Bell's mother took him to talk to police. After a second talk with police, Bell decided he didn't want to talk any more and went into hiding -- until he was arrested a month later trying to sneak out the back door of a friend's house when police arrive.

Flanagan's first witness Wednesday was the dead man's mother, Kimberly Welch, who verbally sparred with Bennett.

The mother also admitted her son sold her crack cocaine "if I begged him," but she wondered why Bennett asked her about her son's drug activities -- which she admitted -- but not about Bell.

"My son wasn't a major drug dealer. He was just trying to make a little money so he could take care of his son. My son was a good boy. -- Why don't you ask me about Djuan selling drugs?" she said on the witness stand.

The charges against Bell carry a maximum sentence of life in prison.

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