

Teen Guilty In Shooting Of Teacher

Largo High Incident Raised Violence Issue

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A Prince George's County jury found a 17-year-old guilty last night of attempted murder and six other felony charges in the shooting of a Largo High School teacher inside a school restroom last spring.

The jury deliberated for nearly eight hours before convicting Warren E. Graham of second-degree attempted murder and related assault and weapon charges.

Graham was acquitted of first-degree attempted murder but still faces a sentence of life in prison, said Kenneth Eichner, the prosecutor who tried the case. Sentencing was set for Sept. 19.

The April 8 incident, believed to be the first shooting of a teacher by a student in the Washington area, prompted an outpouring of concern from local and national officials, as well as from other teachers, about violence in schools.

Graham, had taken the semiautomatic service weapon that belonged to his father, a police officer, to school and was showing it to another student.

He was loading the gun when a teacher, Barrington Miles, entered the second-floor restroom and ordered Graham, a senior, to hand over the weapon. Miles testified this week that Graham responded, "Uh-uh cuz, not today," and fired a single shot, leaving the 45-year-old teacher critically wounded.

The bullet pierced Miles's chest, shattering five ribs and puncturing three major organs. Miles, a solemn, slender man who was a star collegiate football player, was in the hospital for several weeks recovering from his wounds. After the verdict yesterday, Miles said that he was unsure if he would return to teaching when the county's public schools reopen and that he had mixed emotions about the jury's decision.

"I was kind of sad," Miles told a group of reporters in front of the county courthouse in Upper Marlboro. "I knew this young man." Miles has been a teacher for more than 20 years in the county schools. He testified that he had known Graham for four years before their encounter.

"Hopefully, these other students will learn from this. The lesson I would like for them to learn from this is that they are responsible for their actions," Miles said.

Graham, stocky and baby-faced, stared ahead as the jury forewoman announced the panel's verdict and as he was led by sheriff's deputies from the courtroom.

On Thursday, he testified that he never intended to shoot Miles, whom he said he had greeted in the school hallway only seconds before he shot him. Graham testified that he had just loaded the 9mm handgun when Miles walked into the restroom and demanded that he surrender it. Initially, Graham testified, he refused, but then he said he extended his arm to give the gun to Miles.

"I had all intentions of giving him the gun, because I didn't want to hurt him," he told the jury. "And then the gun went off." A firearm expert testified Wednesday that the gun was in good condition and required 10 to 12 pounds of pressure to fire.

Graham testified that he had taken his father's gun on the morning of the shooting to protect himself from a group of young men he had argued with earlier in the week.

The jury declined to comment on its deliberations.

Conviction of first-degree attempt to murder would have required the jurors to conclude that Graham clearly planned to murder Miles, while a second-degree conviction required that the jury conclude only that the youth intended to either kill or cause serious injury, Eichner said.

A few days after the incident, U.S. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley cited the shooting in an address on school violence, in which he advocated a unified federal anti-crime effort.

"A line is being crossed which has never been crossed before in our society," causing teachers and students to worry about "just staying alive," Riley said.

President Clinton said the federal government should help pay for security measures, such as metal detectors,

at schools that need them.

The president was asked by a Largo student at a televised forum what he could do to help the school get metal detectors.

Until guns are out of the hands of students, "every school that needs it ought to have whatever security is needed to take care of that," the president said. "You ought to be safe at school."

After the shooting, County Executive Parris N. Glendening instructed Police Chief David B. Mitchell to prepare a comprehensive plan to improve school safety.

Staff writer Martin Weil contributed to this report