

LONG BEACH, CA — On Wednesday, November 8, 2024, Frank Biegel, one of the men accused in the brutal murder of 17 year old gas station attendant, Larry Totmann, on July 14, took the stand in his own defense during the ongoing trial at the Governor Deukmejian Courthouse.

Biegel, 43, of Long Beach, was charged with first-degree murder and robbery along with his co-defendant Eric A. Knapp, also from Long Beach. The prosecution alleges that the two men robbed a Baytree Road service station of \$83 and then abducted and killed Totmann in a remote area. Biegel's testimony provided crucial details about the events leading up to the murder, as well as his role in the crime. During cross-examination by District Attorney, Ramon Hernandez, Biegel admitted to his involvement in the robbery but claimed he was unaware that Knapp intended to kill Totmann.

"Did you commit a robbery at a service station on Baytree Road last July 14?" Hernandez asked him to which Biegel responded, "Yes I did...I went inside to use the bathroom while Eric took care of the rest."

According to Biegel, the situation escalated after a confrontation between Totmann and a group of young people who had arrived at the station. While Biegel was inside the restroom, the youths argued with the attendant over the use of the telephone. When Biegel returned to his car, he saw Knapp holding a gun on Totmann. Biegel recalls Knapp ordering Totmann to hand over the money from the cash register and discovers a gun hidden under the counter, which he placed in a box along with stolen cash. Biegel confirmed that the pair then drove Totmann several miles out of town, where the victim was then ordered to lie down in the bushes.

"Did you know that Knapp was going to shoot him?" Hernandez pressed, to which Biegel immediately answered, "No...I thought we were just going to leave him there so he couldn't call the cops right away."

But Biegel testified that Knapp then shot Totmann four times at close range, although he could not see exactly where the bullets struck due to the darkness. Biegel described hearing the gunshots and seeing "blue flames" coming from the weapon. When asked if Totmann tried to escape or speak, Biegel confirmed that the young attendant remained motionless. "He just lay there; he never moved." Biegel said.

After the murder, Biegel drove Knapp back to his apartment, where they drank beer and divided the loot — less than \$100. The two later disposed of the guns used in the crime by throwing them into a sewer near a ballpark in a different part of town.

Biegel testified that Knapp killed Totmann because the victim might have recognized him. "I didn't know he was going to shoot anyone." Biegel said, emphasizing that he didn't pull the trigger. His defense argues he was an unwilling accomplice. Biegel admitted he hoped cooperating would reduce his sentence.

When asked if he was promised anything in exchange for his testimony, Biegel said, "No one's promised me anything."

The trial, which began November 6, is expected to conclude this week, with defense starting its case on November 12. Both defendants face the death penalty if convicted.