

Edenfield jury hears more of recorded confession

Glynn County man faces the death penalty in slaying of 6-year-old

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Defense attorneys James Yancey, Jr. (left) and John Beall IV talk while defendant David Edenfield listens at the Glynn County Courthouse on Thursday, the second day of his trial in the murder of Christopher Barrios Jr.

BRUNSWICK — Jurors watched and listened carefully Thursday to the rest of a DVD recording of David Edenfield confessing that he sexually assaulted then choked 6-year-old Christopher Michael Barrios Jr. to death.

On the recording, Edenfield is seen calmly describing the killing as exciting and saying he acted instinctively to kill the boy.

As in Wednesday's opening of his death penalty murder trial, Edenfield, 61, showed no emotion as he watched himself dispassionately describe how he and his 34-year-old son, George Edenfield, killed the kindergartener who had begged them to stop. The boy was killed after he threatened to tell his father and grandmother the Edenfields had molested him, David Edenfield told a Glynn County police detective during the 2 1/2 hour interview.

David and George Edenfield, who is a convicted child molester, and Peggy, David's wife and George's mother, were neighbors of Christopher's extended family in Canal Mobile Home Park on Horseshoe Lane.

All three are charged with molesting and murdering the boy. District Attorney Stephen Kelley is seeking the death penalty against all but Peggy Edenfield. David Edenfield is the first to stand trial.

Aside from the DVD of Edenfield, much of Thursday's testimony centered on the results of DNA tests, identifying Christopher through dental records and other forensic evidence. Special Assistant District Attorney John B. Johnson told Judge Stephen Scarlett that prosecutors would likely call four more witnesses today and conclude the state's case. Prosecutors also played another shorter DVD of an interview with Edenfield, in which he described his son as mentally retarded and said his son alone was responsible for Christopher's death and molestation although he "loved children to death." That interview occurred after George told police the devil made him kill Christopher, but before the boy's body was found.

Edenfield in the longer recorded interview initially continued denying his involvement but gradually detailed how he sodomized then helped strangle the boy.

Edenfield said he put his hands on top of George's and together they choked the boy, he said on the recording.

"I guess it was just instinct ... I just wanted to see what it felt like to choke somebody," said Edenfield, who originally denied squeezing the boy's neck.

After Christopher was dead, Edenfield said he, George and Peggy Edenfield sexually gratified themselves.

"Christopher was dead ... I guess it excited all of us," Edenfield said.

Edenfield said he didn't know how the boy got into their home, but George had him in his bedroom, where he stripped off his clothes before sexually assaulting him.

Kelley played the first hour of the recording Wednesday.

Some of the jurors grimaced Thursday morning as they listened to Edenfield detail in crude, sexually explicit language the March 8, 2007 slaying he first blamed on his son. As he was being sexually assaulted, the boy cried and begged them to stop, which prompted George to say they would have to kill him, David Edenfield said.

“Christopher was crying, not screaming just kind of scared. He was saying: 'No. Stop. Stop, Stop' while George put his hands around his throat and choked him,” Edenfield said.

The boy struggled and tried to push George’s hands away. George grabbed and held the boy’s hands behind his back so he couldn’t fight or escape while being sodomized then strangled, Edenfield said.

Detective Ray Sarro asked Edenfield if he helped restrain the boy. Sarro, who has since retired, told Edenfield to tell the truth because police had evidence that would reveal if he lied, the recording showed.

“Yes sir, I was holding him down and he was alive then. It was just me holding him down,” Edenfield said.

He confessed to Sarro during an interrogation March 16, 2007, the day after authorities found the boy’s decomposed body wrapped in five black plastic bags and dumped in woods.

Edenfield told Sarro that Christopher was molested and slain before they called a family friend, Donald Dale, to come to their home to help dispose of the body.

That call was about 8:40 p.m. March 8, 2007, about two hours after the boy was last seen alive by neighbors.

Dale’s landlord, Tim Frayne, testified Thursday that Dale was with him from 9 a.m. until about 8:45 p.m. March 8, 2007, and therefore could not have been at the Edenfield home before Christopher was killed and his body dumped.

Sarro left Edenfield alone several times during the interrogation at Glynn County police headquarters. During those times, Edenfield picked up crime scene photos of Christopher’s body, muttered to himself and tossed them back onto a table where Sarro had left them.

At times Edenfield put his head in his hands, rested his head on his folded arms on top of the table or leaned back in his chair while waiting for Sarro to return.

After returning, Sarro asked Edenfield what he thought when he looked at the photos.

“It’s my fault. I should have been a grown man and stopped it but I didn’t. I should be punished I guess go to prison and get killed for it,” Edenfield replied.

Sarro later asked Edenfield if he felt any emotions at seeing the photo of the boy’s decomposed body.

“It’s a horrible, horrible sight. It never should have happened,” Edenfield responded.

Also Thursday, Barbara Retzer, a forensic biologist with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, testified she analyzed saliva found on Christopher’s body, semen found on the bags he was wrapped in and blood samples from all three Edenfields.

She found no DNA linking the Edenfields to the boy, Retzer testified. The advance state of decomposition as well as heat and humidity, would have degraded any DNA until it could not be detected, she said.

Scarlett told the attorneys to “be prepared to work a full day” Saturday. He gave no indication whether the trial would recess Sunday, By law, Georgia juries cannot deliberate on Sunday but are allowed to hear evidence.

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