

Moreno Says Son's Death Was An Accident; Closing Arguments Tuesday

By Shawn R. Beals

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Tony Moreno, right, and Moreno's attorney Norman A. Pattis

The man accused of killing his infant son by throwing him off the Arrigoni Bridge told jurors who will begin to decide his fate next week that his baby's death was an accident.

Tony Moreno, 23, testified Friday that he walked to the bridge to kill himself and brought 7-month-old Aaden along, but never intended to harm the child. He said he was holding Aaden and talking to him while standing at the bridge railing, pointing out landmarks including the movie theater where he first kissed the child's mother.

Aaden moved in his arms and slipped from his grasp, Moreno said. Already distraught about his relationship with ex-girlfriend Adrienne Oyola and intending to kill himself, Moreno told jurors he did not fully comprehend what happened.

“I just kind of panicked and shut down completely,” Moreno said during testimony

Friday, his second day on the witness stand in Superior Court. "I started freaking out. I dropped to the ground and I was having a little difficulty breathing. I couldn't make sense of what happened."

He said as he was getting off the ground, his mother and a police officer arrived on the bridge. He said he walked away from them, climbed over the railing, and jumped into the Connecticut River.

Moreno was the only witness called by his defense attorney, Norman A. Pattis. Evidence concluded Friday. Closing arguments are scheduled for Tuesday morning, and the jury could begin deliberations by the afternoon.

Moreno faces up to 70 years in prison if convicted on charges of murder and risk of injury to a child. On Friday, he was emotional while testifying but more collected than he was on Thursday when his attorney asked for a delay because of the difficulty he was having answering questions.

Moreno testified that when he sent text messages to the boy's mother that said Aaden was dead, the baby was still alive. He said he was trying to get her attention and upset her, and that he never intended to kill Aaden.

Middlesex State's Attorney Peter McShane cross-examined Moreno for nearly an hour,



Moreno Testifies In Death Of 7-Month-Old Baby

asking Moreno why he didn't leave Aaden at home if he was planning on only killing himself, and why he didn't seek help or call 911. McShane also questioned, why, if he wasn't planning to kill Aaden, he brought only a blanket with him and no diapers or food for the baby.

McShane pointed out that Moreno called his mother and asked her to go to the bridge to retrieve Aaden's stroller and a cellphone with photos of the two of them on it.

"You didn't tell her to come pick up Aaden, did you?" McShane asked.

"No," Moreno answered.

"You didn't mention that?" he asked again.

"No," Moreno replied again.

Moreno said he didn't remember

much about his leap off the bridge into the Connecticut River. Testimony showed he was in the water for about 30 minutes before being pulled out by personnel on the fire department's rescue boat.

"I only remember being in there for about a minute or a minute and a half and I blacked out," he said. "I woke up at Hartford Hospital. I don't remember being in the water. I just remember waking up in the hospital."

State witnesses testified that Moreno told a psychiatrist in the hospital that he planned on killing himself but also planned to kill his son to prevent him from being raised by Oyola's family. He told McShane Friday that he did not remember saying that to the psychiatrist.

Oyola testified Wednesday that her troubled relationship with Moreno came to a head

when she refused his marriage proposal on the day of her senior prom in June 2015, a month before Aaden's death.

During that month, Oyola went to her prom on June 6, graduated high school June 16, applied for a restraining order June 17, signed a shared-custody agreement after a court hearing June 29 and suffered the death of her baby on July 5.

Moreno and Oyola had been dating for a few years and got along fine until she got pregnant with Aaden, she testified. Things became strained, and their relationship got even worse after Aaden was born Nov. 19, 2014, she said. In the application for a restraining order she wrote that she feared for her safety and Aaden's. Family court Judge Barry C. Pinkus did not grant a full restraining order, and encouraged the two instead to form a shared-custody agreement.

Pattis said in court this week that Moreno was willing to plead guilty to charges less than murder, like manslaughter. He said Moreno does not deny responsibility for Aaden's death, but never intended to kill the child.

"We want the jury to know Mr. Moreno accepts criminal responsibility for his son's death. He was alone with his son when his son went into the water," Pattis said in court on Thursday. "Mr. Moreno accepts

responsibility for his son's death, but in his view it was not murder." ■