

JNDAY

JUNE 15, 1997

Weather: Mostly sunny

High 81, low 54. Details: TRAVEL-6

Between the raindrops

■ Jeff Maggert holds a one-stroke lead over Tom Lehman (right) entering the final day of the U.S. Open

SPORTS



The 'Wild' ride

■ Hollister biker rally inspired classic Brando movie

CUE



The Argus

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Child sees violent death of his parents

By David Ferris
STAFF WRITER

FREMONT — The only one who might have seen Shannon Connors and Eddie Munoz Buendia die is their infant son.

Eddie Jr., 13 months old, was in his diapers sitting in the back of Buendia's car on Gallegos Avenue on Tuesday when his father took aim at his mother, fired two shots, and turned the gun on himself. A day later, both were dead.

Were he able to talk, Eddie Jr. might relate what the last, fierce argument between his estranged parents was about. Perhaps

■ Obituary for Shannon Connors.

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The murder and suicide stunned the family, friends and acquaintances of both Connors, just turned 18, and Buendia. In interviews by The Argus with more than 20 family members, friends, co-workers, supervisors, counselors and neighbors, none believed that the rift between two adoring parents would ever go so far, so fast.

he could have shed some light on what turned the 21-year-old Buendia from a lonely, obsessed father into a killer.

When Buendia's and Connors' bodies fell, milestones toppled like dominoes. A day later, Connors would have applied for her first driver's license. A week later, Buendia would have graduated with a technical degree in computer design. The next year, Connors would have arrived at the end of a long road toward a high school diploma.

Shannon Connors accomplished the rare feat of being popular with everyone at Robertson Continuation School. Her smile, bouncy personality and wry humor won ev-

Please see **Eddie Jr.**, A-13



At first, Shannon Connors and Eddie Buendia seemed happy as a baby grew inside her. But as months passed, Connors spent less time with Buendia. He became angry when she spent time with other men, or even her girlfriends.

Eddie Jr.: If infant could talk, what would he say?

Continued from A-1

ryone over, though she'd been here only a year.

"She was high on life, basically," said school friend Nicholas Anderson. "She took everything and stretched it to make it better."

Connors volunteered to collect clothes and food for the homeless, counseled her peers and served as secretary to MeCha, a school Chicano club.

Connors loved to move to music — at a school dance, at a rave, in impromptu sessions outside of the parked car with the radio blaring. She slapped her palm against the air rushing by when she and her friends cruised the strips in San Jose.

She was introduced to Buendia by her cousin two years ago on one such cruising night. He tried to talk her up. She wasn't interested. But at least he was able to supply her with a phone number.

She called him.

Two months later, Shannon Connors and Eddie Buendia learned they were going to have

HOW TO HELP

Contributions to a trust fund for Eddie Connors Jr. can be sent to Eureka Bank, Fremont Branch, 3990 Fremont Blvd., Fremont CA 94538.

a baby.

The only one who might have seen Shannon Connors and Eddie Munoz Buendia die is their infant son.

If he could talk, what would he say?

"I guess (Buendia) got tired of trying, or something," said Ernesto Bejarano, a co-worker of Buendia's at Nuestra Casa, a San Jose agency that works to redeem young gang members.

Perhaps, Bejarano guessed, Buendia pulled out the 25-millimeter Beretta with the thought, "I want to be with the mother of my son."

Eddie Munoz Buendia, standing no more than five-foot-

four-inches tall, made his high school basketball team. Recently he became a champ of midnight-basketball competitions.

Buendia was born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, to an alcoholic father who drank himself to death at age 23, when Buendia was only five. A little less than a decade later, Buendia and his mother split ways when he refused to move to Texas with her. He was comfortable with the street culture of San Jose.

The aunts who took him in considered him a jokester with a quick wit and quick smile. But to strangers and superiors he was reserved and quiet, a man with a past. The phrase "Mi Vida Loca" (My Crazy Life) was tattooed around his throat like a necklace.

Buendia lived on the fringes of gang life. Instead of fists, he expressed his emotion with a spray-paint canister. Three years ago, he was arrested in a police sweep of graffiti vandals.

He chose to do his sentence of 500 hours of community

service at Nuestra Casa. The obligation turned into a four-year volunteer stint, then last year into a half-time job as a youth adviser.

In early 1996 he enrolled in a multimedia program at Masters Institute in San Jose. Teachers praised his talent at massaging vibrant pictures out of the computer. He even won an internship at a San Jose Chicano magazine — an assignment that had him redesigning the magazine's logo at the time he died.

Despite his success, Buendia ached over the fact that Connors had broken up with him just a few months after Eddie Jr. was born.

As the baby grew in Connors' womb, things grew dark between Connors and Buendia.

At first they seemed happy. But as the months progressed, Connors stopped spending time

with Buendia at his aunt's place. He nursed an abiding anger that she should spend time — any time — with other men, or even her girlfriends.

Connors told her friends he hit her, kicked her, even when she was eight months pregnant. He shouted at her and intimidated her. After the baby was born, Buendia would sometimes chase after and grab at her when they happened to see each other on a night out.

Her world revolved around Eddie Jr., and she would crawl around on the ground with him in delight. For the first time, she displayed serious determination to finish high school — for Eddie Jr.

"I don't care about me," she told her prom date.

Tuesday morning, Connors' mother Debbie bid her farewell at 8 a.m. In San Jose, Buen-

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dia's aunt said goodbye to him as he stood outside their home.

Beyond that, almost nothing is known. Buendia's car engine was cold when police arrived. Several people heard the shots; one 7-year-old neighbor heard Buendia shout "get in the car!" twice, interspersed with gunshots.

Eddie Jr. is the only one who might have seen Shannon Connors and Eddie Munoz Buendia die.

When Eddie Jr. was pulled from the car, he seemed stunned. "It was like God put a protective cover over him," said Gail Pi-Gonzalez, a neighbor who was the first to care for him. She gave him little yellow chicken toy and put a shirt on his naked chest.

The family has decided that Eddie Jr. will be raised by his Connors' mother, Debbie.