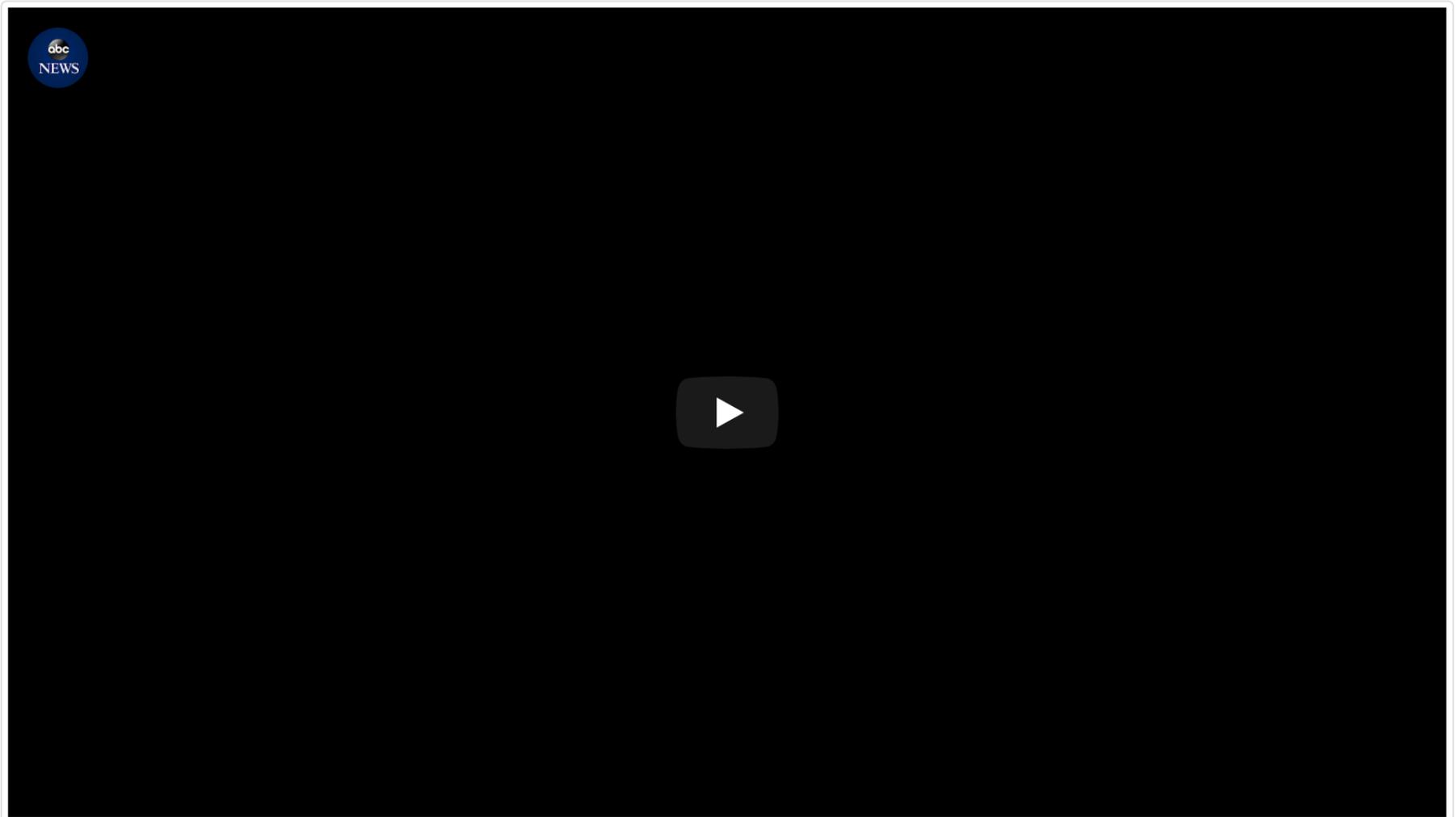


The Curious Case of the Copycat Parrot



Warning:

The video at right contains language that may be offensive to some.

Can a pet provide testimony in a murder trial? Well, as it turns out, an African grey parrot nearly did in the State of Michigan. In May of 2015, police responded to a call for a well-being check at the home of Martin and Glenna Duram. Police discovered the Duram's suffering from multiple gun shots and believed this case was a botched murder-suicide. Martin Duram suffered five gun shot wounds and was pronounced dead. Glenna Duram suffered a single gun shot wound to the head but survived. Glenna Duram was charged with murder in the death of her husband.

The Duram's pet, a 19-year-old African grey parrot named Bud, was in the home during the shooting. Mr. Duram's ex-wife took ownership of the pet and two weeks after bringing him home, the bird started repeating an argument, emulating both a female and male voice. The bird is heard to repeat the words, "*Don't f**ing shoot*" in the voice of Martin Duram. The prosecutor was considering whether the bird's mimicry could be used in court as evidence against Ms. Duram.

In 1993, a similar situation occurred when Charles Ogulnick was charged with murdering a business associate. In this case, another African-grey parrot was present during the murder and following the murder had begun repeating, "*No, Richard, no, no, no!*" In this case, Mr. Ogulnick's attorney wanted to use these utterances to help exonerate Charles Ogulnick, as Mr. Ogulnick's first name is clearly not "*Richard.*"

In order to be sworn in - the process in which one promises to tell the truth on the witness stand - you must be able to understand the importance of telling the truth. Clearly a bird, albeit a very intelligent one, is unlikely to be able to discern this important distinction. However, using expert testimony, the bird's statements might be considered admissible. At the time of this writing, this theory has yet to be tested successfully in Canada. Interestingly enough, there are cases in other countries, notably France, where a dog's reaction to its owner's suspected killers was considered by the judge.

Both Charles Ogulnick and Glenna Duram were found guilty without using the evidence of the parrots. In the Duram case, the prosecutor declined to offer the bird's mimicry as evidence to the jury. In the Ogulnick case, the judge convicted Mr. Ogulnick without ever hearing from the bird.