



### **F33 Death in the Line of Duty: A New York Police Department (NYPD) Officer Gunned Down During a Botched Robbery**

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The goal of this presentation is to illustrate the anatomy of a major case in which NYPD Officer Anthony Sanchez was murdered while responding to a burglary/robbery in progress.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by discussing forensic techniques used in 1997 and whether those techniques possess the same scientific validity in 2017.

After midnight on May 19, 1997, Scott Schneiderman shot and killed uniformed Police Officer Anthony Sanchez as Schneiderman fled from a botched attempt to rob his own father. He had entered his father's penthouse apartment that night, wearing a mask and armed with a gun, and had terrorized his father and his father's fiancé in an effort to steal the substantial sums of cash that the defendant knew his father kept in his apartment safe. When police officers flooded into the building in response to the 911 call, Schneiderman abandoned his robbery effort and fled into the building's stairwell.

Officer Sanchez was to wait at the front of the building while his partner went upstairs with two other officers. Instead, when another resident answered the numerous buzzers for initial entry, Officer Sanchez entered the building, went to the fourth floor and, alone, started up the fire stairs toward the roof. Schneiderman ambushed Officer Sanchez, who was climbing the stairs in an effort to gain access to the penthouse. Schneiderman heard Sanchez call out, "police," then waited silently above the tenth-floor landing for the officer to come near him. When Sanchez had passed the ninth-floor landing, Schneiderman fired his gun directly down, six or seven times in rapid succession, striking the officer in the back of the neck with one of those shots. Bleeding and coughing up blood, Sanchez retreated down the steps with Schneiderman following after him. Between the seventh- and eighth-floor landings, the officer paused and fired four shots upward toward Schneiderman, hitting the defendant on his side and arm. The officer then continued down the stairs to the second-floor landing, where he collapsed and died.

Meanwhile, multiple 911 callers reported a robbery in progress, and the shots fired by both Schneiderman and Officer Sanchez were captured on some of the recordings. These would prove critical in proving who shot first. Human error in recounting events occurred, yet forensic analysis of the evidence helped to counteract its effect.

Schneiderman was captured hiding in the elevator when the building was searched. He had left a trail of physical evidence along the way, and crime scene detectives documented bullet trajectory, blood spatter, and other evidence in order to reconstruct the scene. Schneiderman claimed self-defense and said that the slain officer fired at him first. He spent more than four hours on the witness stand trying to convince the jury that he was the victim of over-aggressive policing. The evidence disproved that theory by using a combination of forensic science and eyewitness testimony in one of the most gripping trials in New York City history.

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**Homicide, Crime Scene Investigation, Police Officer Murder**