

# THE COLUMBINE TAPES

**In five secret videos they recorded before the massacre, the killers reveal their hatreds—and their lust for fame**

**By Nancy Gibbs and Timothy Roche**

**THE NATURAL BORN KILLERS WAITED** until the parents were asleep upstairs before heading down to the basement to put on their show. The first videotape is almost unbearable to watch.

Dylan Klebold sits in the tan La-Z-Boy, chewing on a toothpick. Eric Harris adjusts his video camera a few feet away, then settles into his chair with a bottle of Jack Daniels and a sawed-off shotgun in his lap. He calls it Arlene, after a favorite character in the gory Doom video games and books that he likes so much. He takes a small swig. The whiskey stings, but he tries to hide it, like a small child playing grownup. These videos, they predict, will be shown all around the world one day—once they have produced their masterpiece and everyone wants to know how, and why.

Above all, they want to be seen as originals. “Do not think we’re trying to copy anyone,” Harris warns, recalling the school shootings in Oregon and Kentucky. They had the idea long ago, “before the first one ever happened.”

And their plan is better, “not like those f\_\_\_s in Kentucky with camouflage and .22s. Those kids were only trying to be accepted by others.”

Harris and Klebold have an inventory of their ecumenical hatred: all “niggers, spics, Jews, gays, f\_\_\_ing whites,” the enemies who abused them and the friends who didn’t do enough to defend them. But it will all be over soon. “I hope we kill 250 of you,” Klebold says. He thinks it will be the most “nerve-racking 15 minutes of my life, after the bombs are set and we’re waiting to charge through the school. Seconds will be like hours. I can’t wait. I’ll be shaking like a leaf.”

“It’s going to be like f\_\_\_ing Doom,” Harris says. “Tick, tick, tick, tick... Haa! That f\_\_\_ing shotgun is straight out of Doom!”

How easy it has been to fool everyone, as they staged their dress rehearsals, gathered their props—the shotguns in their gym bags, the pipe bombs in the closet. Klebold recounts for the camera the time his parents walked in on him when he was trying on his black leather trench coat, with his sawed-off shotgun hidden underneath: “They didn’t even know it was there.” Once, Harris re-

calls, his mother saw him carrying a gym bag with a gun handle sticking out of the zipper. She assumed it was his BB gun. Every day Klebold and Harris went to school, sat in class, had lunch with their schoolmates, worked with their teachers and plotted their slaughter. People fell for every lie. “I could convince them that I’m going to climb Mount Everest, or I have a twin brother growing out of my back,” says Harris. “I can make you believe anything.”

Even when it is over, they promise, it will not be over. In memory and nightmares, they hope to live forever. “We’re going to kick-start a revolution,” Harris says—a revolution of the dispossessed. They talk about being ghosts who will haunt the survivors—“create flashbacks from what we do,” Harris promises, “and drive them insane.”

It is getting late now. Harris looks at his watch. He says the time is 1:28 a.m. March 15. Klebold says people will note the date and time when watching it. And he knows what his parents will be thinking. “If only we could have reached them sooner or found this tape,” he predicts they will say. “If only we would have searched their

room,” says Harris. “If only we would have asked the right questions.”

SINCE THEN, WE’VE NEVER STOPPED ASKING, of course, in our aching effort to get back on our feet, slowly, carefully, only to be pushed back down again. And what if the answers turn out to be different from what we’ve heard all along? A six-week TIME investigation of the Columbine case tracked the efforts of the police and FBI, who are still sorting through some 10,000 pieces of evidence, 5,000 leads, the boys’ journals and websites and the five secret home videos they made in the weeks before the massacre. Within the next few weeks, the investigators are expected to issue their report, and their findings are bound to surprise a town, and a country, that has heard all about the culture of cruelty, the bullying jocks, and has concluded that two ugly, angry boys just snapped, and fired back.

It turns out there is much more to the story than that.

Why, if their motive was rage at the athletes who taunted them, didn’t they take their guns and bombs to the locker

## “Tick, tick, tick, tick...Haa! That f\_\_\_ing shotgun is straight out of Doom.”

—ERIC HARRIS

### WHAT THE INVESTIGATORS HAVE LEARNED

#### ■ WARNINGS WERE IGNORED

Police received complaints about Harris' violent website, which contained threats against another student, but failed to investigate.

#### ■ THEY PLOTTED FOR A FULL YEAR

Harris and Klebold had planned their attack on Columbine for more than a year. They had wanted to strike on April 19, but later let it slip by a day.

#### ■ THERE WAS NO BACKUP PLAN

The duo had planned to gun down students as they fled bombs in the cafeteria. But the bombs fizzled, and the gunmen began firing aimlessly.

#### ■ SWAT TEAMS WERE TOO LATE

The best chance to get the killers was during their first 7 min. in the library. But by the time the teams deployed, the killers were moving.

#### ■ GUNMEN WERE EQUAL PARTNERS

Though Harris has been called the dominant personality, ballistics show Klebold fired about as many rounds and killed about as many victims.

room? Because retaliation against specific people was not the point. Because this may have been about celebrity as much as cruelty. “They wanted to be famous,” concludes FBI agent Mark Holstlaw. “And they are. They’re infamous.” It used to be said that living well is the best revenge; for these two, it was to kill and die in spectacular fashion.

This is not to say the humiliation Harris and Klebold felt was not a cause. Because they were steeped in violence and drained of mercy, they could accomplish everything at once: payback to those who hurt them, and glory, the creation of a cult, for all those who have suffered and been cast out. They wanted movies made of their story, which they had carefully laced with “a lot of foreshadowing and dramatic irony,” as Harris put it. There was that poem he wrote, imagining himself as a bullet. “Directors will be fighting over this story,” Klebold said—and the boys chewed over which could be trusted with the script: Steven Spielberg or Quentin Tarantino. “You have two individuals who wanted to immortalize themselves,” says Holstlaw. “They wanted to be martyrs and to document everything they were doing.”

These boys had read their Shakespeare: “Good wombs hath borne bad sons,” Harris quoted from *The Tempest*, as he reflected on how his rampage would ruin his parents’ lives. The boys knew that once they staged their final act, the audience would be desperate for meaning. And so they provided their own poisonous chorus, about why they hated so many people so much. In the weeks before what they called their Judgment Day, they sat in their basement and made their haunting videos—detailing their plans, their motives, even their regrets—which Harris left in his bedroom for the police and his parents to find when it was all over.

The dilemma for many families at Columbine is ours as well. For months they have searched for answers. “It’s not going to bring anything or anybody back,” says Mike Kirklin, whose son survived a shot in the face. “But we do need to know. Why did they do this?” Still, the last thing the survivors want is to see these boys on the cover of another magazine, back in the headlines, on the evening news. We need to understand them, but we don’t want to look at them. And yet there is no escaping this story. Last week another child shot up another school, this time an Oklahoma junior high where four were injured, and all the questions came gushing out one more time.

At Columbine, some wounds are slow to heal. The old library is walled off, while the victims’ families try to raise the mon-

ey to replace it by building a new one. The students still have trouble with fire drills. Some report that kids are drinking more heavily now, saying more prayers, seeing more counselors—550 visits so far this year. Two dozen students are homebound, unable, whether physically or emotionally, to come back to class yet. Tour-bus groups have changed their routes to stop at the high school, and stare.

Some people have found a way to forgive: even parents who lost their beloved children; even kids who won’t ever walk again, or speak clearly, or grow old together with a sister who died on the school lawn. But other survivors are still on a journey, through dark places of anger and suspicion, aimed at a government they fear wants to cover up the misjudgments of police; at a school that wants to shift blame; at the killers’ parents, who have stated their regrets in written statements issued through their lawyers but who still aren’t saying much and who surely, surely had to know something.

It’s easy now to see the signs: how a video-game joystick turned Harris into a better marksman, like a golfer who watches Tiger Woods videos; how he decided to stop taking his Luvox, to let his anger flare, undiluted by medication. How Klebold’s violent essays for English class were like skywriting his intent. If only the parents had looked in the middle drawer of Harris’ desk, they would have found the four windup clocks that he later used as timing devices. Check the duffel bag in the closet; the pipe bombs are inside. In his CD collection, they would have found a recording that meant so much to him that he willed it to a girl in his last videotaped suicide message. The name of the album? *Bombthreat Before She Blows*.

The problem is that until April 20, nobody was looking. And Harris and Klebold knew it.

### ■ THE BASEMENT TAPES

THE TAPES WERE MEANT TO BE THEIR FINAL word, to all those who had picked on them over the years, and to everyone who would come up with a theory about their inner demons. It is clear listening to them that Harris and Klebold were not just having trouble with what their counselors called “anger management.” They fed the anger, fueled it, so the fury could take hold, because they knew they would need it to do what they had set out to do. “More rage. More rage,” Harris says. “Keep building it on,” he says, motioning with his hands for emphasis.

Harris recalls how he moved around so much with his military family and always had to start over, “at the bottom of the lad-

## SPECIAL REPORT THE COLUMBINE TAPES

“People constantly make fun of my face, my hair, my shirts.”

—ERIC HARRIS

der.” People continually made fun of him—“my face, my hair, my shirts.” As for Klebold, “If you could see all the anger I’ve stored over the past four f\_\_\_ing years ...” he says. His brother Byron was popular and athletic and constantly “ripped” on him, as did the brother’s friends. Except for his parents, Klebold says, his extended family treated him like the runt of the litter. “You made me what I am,” he said. “You added to the rage.” As far back as the Foothills Day Care center, he hated the “stuck-up” kids he felt hated him. “Being shy didn’t help,” he admits. “I’m going to kill you all. You’ve been giving us s\_\_\_ for years.”

Klebold and Harris were completely soaked in violence: in movies like *Reservoir Dogs*; in gory video games that they tailored to their imaginations. Harris liked to call himself “Reb,” short for rebel. Klebold’s nickname was VoDKa (his favorite liquor, with the capital DK for his initials). On pipe bombs used in the massacre he wrote “VoDKa Vengeance.”

That they were aiming for 250 dead shows that their motives went far beyond targeting the people who teased them. They planned it very carefully: when they would strike, where they would put the bombs, whether the fire sprinklers would snuff out their fuses. They could hardly wait. Harris picks up the shotgun and makes shooting noises. “Isn’t it fun to get the respect that we’re going to deserve?” he asks.

The tapes are a cloudy window on their moral order. They defend the friends who bought the guns for them, who Harris and Klebold say knew nothing of their intentions—as though they are concerned that innocent people not be blamed for their massacre of innocent people. If they hadn’t got the guns where they did, Harris says, “we would have found something else.”

They had many chances to turn back—and many chances to get caught. They “came close” one day, when an employee of Green Mountain Guns called Harris’ house and his father answered the phone. “Hey, your clips are in,” the clerk said. His father replied that he hadn’t ordered any clips and, as Harris retells it, didn’t ask whether the clerk had dialed the right number. If either one had asked just one question, says Harris, “we would’ve been f\_\_\_ed.”

“We wouldn’t be able to do what we’re going to do,” Klebold adds.

### THE WARNING SIGNS

YOU COULD FILL A GOOD-SIZE ROOM WITH the people whose lives have been twisted into ropes of guilt by the events leading up to that awful day, and by the day itself. The teachers who read the essays but didn’t hear the warnings, the cops who were

tipped to Harris’ poisonous website but didn’t act on it, the judge and youth-services counselor who put the boys through a year of community service after they broke into a van and then concluded that they had been rehabilitated. Because so many people are being blamed and threatened with lawsuits, there are all kinds of public explanations designed to diffuse and defend. But there are private conversations going on as well, within the families, among the cops, in the teachers’ lounge, where people are asking themselves what they could have done differently. Neil Gardner, the deputy assigned to the school who traded gunfire with Harris, says he wishes he could have done more. But with the criticism, he has learned, “you’re not a hero unless you die.”

Nearly everyone who ever knew Harris or Klebold has asked himself the same question: How could we have been duped? Yet the boys were not loners; they had a circle of friends. Harris played soccer (until the fall of 1998), and Klebold was in the drama club. Just the week before the rampage, the boys had to write a poem for an English class. Harris wrote about stopping the hate and loving the world. Klebold went to the prom the weekend before the slaughter; Harris couldn’t get a date but joined him at the postprom parties, to celebrate with students they were planning to kill.

To adults, Klebold had always come across as the bashful, nervous type who could not lie very well. Yet he managed to keep his dark side a secret. “People have no clue,” Klebold says on one videotape. But they should have had. And this is one of the most painful parts of the puzzle, to look back and see the flashing red lights—especially regarding Harris—that no one paid attention to. No one except, perhaps, the Brown family.

Brooks Brown became notorious after the massacre because certain police officers let slip rumors that he might have somehow been involved. And indeed he was—but not in the way the police were suggesting. Brown and Harris had had an argument back in 1998, and Harris had threatened Brown; Klebold also told him that he should read Harris’ website on AOL, and he gave Brooks the Web address.

And there it all was: the dimensions and nicknames of his pipe bombs. The targets of his wrath. The meaning of his life. “I’m coming for EVERYONE soon and I WILL be armed to the f\_\_\_ing teeth and I WILL shoot to kill.” He rails against the people of Denver, “with their rich snobby attitude thinkin they are all high and mighty ... God, I can’t wait til I can kill you people. Feel no remorse, no sense of shame. I don’t care if I live or die in the shoot-out. All I want to do is kill and injure

as many of you as I can, especially a few people. Like Brooks Brown.”

The Browns didn’t know what to do. “We were talking about our son’s life,” says Judy Brown. She and her husband argued heatedly. Randy Brown wanted to call Harris’ father. But Judy didn’t think the father would do anything; he hadn’t disciplined his son for throwing an ice ball at the Browns’ car. Randy considered anonymously faxing printouts from the website to Harris’ father at work, but Judy thought it might only provoke Harris to violence.

Though she had been friends with Susan Klebold for years, Judy hesitated to call and tell her what was said on the website, which included details of Eric and Dylan’s making bombs together. In the end, the Browns decided to call the sheriff’s office. On the night of March 18, a deputy came to their house. They gave him printouts of the website, and he wrote a report for what he labeled a “suspicious incident.” The Browns provided names and addresses for both Harris and Klebold, but they say they told the deputy that they did not want Harris to know their son had reported him.

A week or so later, Judy called the sheriff’s office to find out what had become of their complaint. The detective she spoke with seemed uninterested; he even apologized for being so callous because he had seen so much crime. Mrs. Brown persisted, and she and her husband met with detectives on March 31. Members of the bomb squad helpfully showed them what a pipe bomb looked like—in case one turned up in their mailbox.

The police already had a file on the boys, it turns out: they had been caught breaking into a van and were about to be sentenced. But somehow the new complaint never intersected the first; the Harries and Klebolds were never told that a new complaint had been leveled at Eric Harris. And as weeks passed, the Browns found it harder to get their calls returned as detectives focused on an unrelated triple homicide. Meanwhile, at the school, Deputy Gardner told the two deans that the police were investigating a boy who was looking up how to make pipe bombs on the Web. But the deans weren’t shown the Web page, nor were they given Eric’s name.

As more time passed and nothing happened, the Browns’ fears eased—though they were troubled when their son started hanging out with Harris again. Then came April 20. As the gunmen entered the school, Harris saw Brown and told him to run away. But when all the smoke had cleared and the bodies counted, the Browns went public with their charge that the police had failed to heed their warnings. And even some cops agree.



“Directors will be fighting over this story.” —DYLAN KLEBOLD

“Tarantino . . . Spielberg.” —ERIC HARRIS

“It should have been followed up,” says Sheriff Stone, who did not take office until January 1999. “It fell through the cracks,” admits John Kiebusch, the sheriff’s division chief in charge of investigations and patrol.

Some people still think Brooks Brown must have been involved. When he goes to the Dairy Queen, the kid at the drive-through recognizes him and locks all the doors and windows. Brown knows it is almost impossible to convince people that the rumors were never true. Like many kids, his life now has its markers: before Columbine and after.

## THE INVESTIGATORS

DETECTIVE KATE BATTAN STILL SEES IT IN her sleep—still sees what she saw that first day in April, when she was chosen to lead the task force that would investigate the massacre. Bullet holes in the banks of blue lockers. Ceiling tiles ajar where kids had scampered to hide in the crawl space. Shoes left behind by kids who literally ran out of them. Dead bodies in the library, where students covered beneath tables. One boy died clenching his eyeglasses, and another gripped a pencil as he drew his last breath. Was he writing a goodbye note? Or was he so scared that he forgot he held it? “It was like you walked in and time stopped,” says Battan. “These are kids. You can’t help but think about what their last few minutes were like.”

Long after the bodies had been identified, Battan kept the Polaroids of them in her briefcase. Every morning when starting work, she’d look at them to remind herself whom she was working for.

On the Columbine task force, Battan was known as the Whip. As the lead investigator, she kept 80-plus detectives on track. The task force broke into teams: the pre-bomb team, which took the outside of the school; the library team; the cafeteria team; and the associates team, which investigated Harris’ and Klebold’s friends, including the so-called Trench Coat Mafia, as possible accomplices.

Rich Price is an FBI special agent assigned to the domestic terrorism squad in Denver, a veteran of Oklahoma City and the Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta. He was in the North Carolina mountains searching for suspected bomber Eric Rudolph on April 20 when he heard about the rampage at Columbine. In TV news footage that afternoon, he saw his Denver-based colleagues on the scene and called his office. He was told to return to Denver ASAP—suddenly two teenage boys

had become the target of a domestic-terrorism probe.

Price became head of the cafeteria team, re-creating the morning that hell broke loose. The investigators have talked to the survivors, the teachers, the school authorities; they have reviewed the videotapes from four security cameras placed in the cafeteria, as well as the videos the killers made. And they have walked the school, step by step, trying to re-create 46 minutes that left behind 15 dead bodies and a thousand questions.

Battan is very clear about her responsibilities. “I work for the victims. When they don’t have any more questions, then I feel I’ve done my job.”

It quickly became obvious to the investigators that the assault did not go as the killers had planned. They had wanted to bomb first, then shoot. So they planted three sets of bombs: one set a few miles away, timed to go off first and lure police away from the school; a second set in the cafeteria, to flush terrified students out into the parking lot, where Harris and Klebold would be waiting with their guns to mow them down; and then a third set in their cars, timed to go off once the ambulances and rescue workers descended, to kill them as well. What actually happened instead was mainly an improvisation.

Just before 11 a.m. they hauled two duffel bags containing propane-tank bombs into the cafeteria. Then they returned to their cars, strapped on their weapons and ammunition, pulled on their black trench coats and settled in to wait.

Judgment Day, as they called it, was to begin at 11:17 a.m. But the bombs didn’t go off. After two minutes, they walked toward the school and opened fire, shooting randomly and killing the first two of their 13 victims. And then they headed into the building.

Deputy Gardner was eating his lunch in his patrol car when a janitor called on the radio, saying a girl was down in the parking lot. Gardner drove toward her, heard gunshots and dived behind a Chevy Blazer, trading shots with Harris. “I’ve got to kill this kid,” he kept telling himself. But he was terrified of shooting someone else by accident—and his training instructions directed that he concentrate on guarding the perimeter, so no one could escape.

Patti Nielson, a teacher, had seen Harris and Klebold coming and ran a few steps ahead of them into the library. One kid was doing his math homework on a calculator; another was filling out a college application; another was reading an article in PEOPLE about Brooke Shields’ breakup

with Andre Agassi. “Get down!” Nielson screamed. She dialed 911 and dropped the phone when the two gunmen came in. And so the police have a tape of everything that happened next.

The 911 dispatcher listening on the open phone line could hear Harris and Klebold laughing as their victims screamed. When Harris found Cassie Bernall, he leaned down. “Peekaboo,” he said, and killed her. His shotgun kicked, stunning him and breaking his nose. Blood streamed down his face as he turned to see Brea Pasquale sitting on the floor because she couldn’t fit under a table. “Do you want to die today?” he asked her. “No,” she quivered. Just then Klebold called to him, which spared her life.

Why hadn’t anyone stopped them yet? It was now 11:29; because of the open line, the 911 dispatcher knew for certain—for seven long minutes—that the gunmen were there in the library and were shooting fellow students. At that early stage, though, only about a dozen cops had arrived on the scene, and none of them had protective gear or heavy weapons. They could have charged in with their handguns, but their training, and orders from their commanders, told them to “secure the perimeter” so the shooters couldn’t escape and couldn’t pursue the students who had fled. And by the time the trained SWAT units were pulling in, the killers were on the move again.

Leaving the library, Harris and Klebold walked down a flight of stairs to the cafeteria. It was empty, except for 450 book bags and the four students who hid beneath tables. All the killing and the yelling upstairs had made the shooters thirsty. Surveillance cameras recorded them as they drank from cups that fleeing kids had left on tables. Then they went back to work. They were frustrated that the bombs they had left, inside and outside, had not exploded, and they watched out the windows as the police and ambulances and SWAT teams descended on the school.

MOST PEOPLE WATCHING THE LIVE TELEVISION coverage that day saw them too, the nearly 800 police officers who would eventually mass outside the high school. The TV audience saw SWAT-team members who stood for hours outside, while, as far as everyone knew at the time, the gunmen were holding kids hostage inside. For the parents whose children were still trapped, there was no excuse for the wait. “When 500 officers go to a battle zone and not one comes away with a scratch, then something’s wrong,” charges Dale Todd,



## SPECIAL REPORT THE COLUMBINE TAPES

# “I’m sorry. Like Shakespeare says, Good wombs hath borne bad sons.”

—ERIC HARRIS

whose son Evan was wounded inside the school. “I expected dead officers, crippled officers, disfigured officers—not just children and teachers.”

This criticism is “like a punch in the gut,” says sheriff’s captain Terry Manwaring, who was the SWAT commander that day. “We were prepared to die for those kids.”

So why the delay in attacking the gunmen? Chaos played a big part. From the moment of the first report of gunshots at Columbine, SWAT-team members raced in from every direction, some without their equipment, some in jeans and T shirts, just trying to get there quickly. They had only two Plexiglas ballistic shields among them. As Manwaring dressed in his bulletproof gear, he says, he asked several kids to draw on notebook paper whatever they could remember of the layout of the sprawling, 250,000-sq.-ft. school. But the kids were so upset that they were not even sure which way was north.

Through most of the 46 minutes that Harris and Klebold were shooting up the school, police say they couldn’t tell where the gunmen were, or how many of them there were. Students and teachers trapped in various parts of the school were flooding 911 dispatchers with calls reporting that the shooters were, simultaneously, inside the cafeteria, the library and the front office. They might have simply followed the sounds of gunfire—except, police say, fire alarms were ringing so loudly that they couldn’t hear a gunshot 20 feet away.

So the officers treated the problem as a hostage situation, moving into the school through entrances far from the one where Harris and Klebold entered. The units painstakingly searched each hallway and closet and classroom and crawl space for gunmen, bombs and booby traps. “Every time we came around a corner,” says Sergeant Allen Simmons, who led the first four SWAT officers inside, “we didn’t know what was waiting for us.” They created safe corridors to evacuate the students they found hiding in classrooms. And they moved very slowly and cautiously.

Evan Todd, 16, tells a different story. Wounded in the library, he waited until the killers moved on, and then he fled outside to safety. Evan, who is familiar with guns, says he immediately briefed a dozen police officers. “I described it all to them—the guns they were using, the ammo. I told them they could save lives [of the wounded still in the library if they moved in right away]. They told me to calm down and take my frustrations elsewhere.”

At about noon Harris and Klebold returned to the library. All but two wounded kids and four teachers had managed to get out while they were gone. The gun-

men fired a few more rounds out the window at cops and medics below. Then Klebold placed one final Molotov cocktail, made from a Frappuccino bottle, on a table. As it sizzled and smoked, Harris shot himself, falling to the floor. When Klebold fired seconds later, his Boston Red Sox cap landed on Harris’ leg. They were dead by 12:05 p.m., when the sprinkler turned on, extinguishing what was supposed to be their last bomb.

But the police didn’t know any of this. They were still searching, slowly, along corridors and in classrooms. They found two janitors hiding in the meat freezer. Students and teachers had barricaded themselves and refused to open doors, worried that the shooters might be posing as cops.

Upstairs in a science classroom, student Kevin Starkey called 911. Teacher Dave Sanders had been shot running in the upstairs hallway, trying to warn people; he was bleeding badly and needed help fast. But by this time the 911 lines were so flooded with calls that the phone company started disconnecting people—including Starkey. Finally the 911 dispatcher used his personal cell phone and kept a line open to the classroom so he could help guide police there.

Listening to another dispatcher in his earpiece, Sergeant Barry Williams, who was leading a second SWAT team inside, tried to track Sanders down—but he says no one could tell him where the science rooms were. Still, he and his team searched on, looking for a rag that kids said they had tied on the doorknob as a signal.

The team finally found Sanders in a room with 50 or 60 kids. A paramedic went to work, trying to stop the bleeding and get him out to an ambulance. But it had all taken too long. Though Harris and Klebold had killed themselves three hours earlier, the SWAT team hadn’t reached Sanders until close to 3 p.m.

Sanders’ daughter Angela often talks to the students who tried to save her dad. “How many of those kids could have lived if they had moved more quickly?” she asks. “This is what I do every day. I sit and ponder, ‘What if?’”

The SWAT team members wonder too. By the time they got to the library, they found that the assault on the school was all over. Scattered around the library was “a sea of bombs” that had not exploded. Trying not to kick anything, the SWAT team members looked for survivors. And then they found the killers, already dead. “We’ll never know why they stopped when they did,” says Battan.

Given how long the cops took and how much ammunition the killers had, the

death toll could have been far worse. But some parents still think it didn’t need to have been as high as it was. They pressed Colorado Governor Bill Owens, who has appointed a commission to review Columbine and possibly update SWAT tactics for assailants who are moving and shooting. “There may be times when you just walk through until you find the killers,” Owens says. “This is the first time this has happened.” The local lawmen “didn’t know what they were dealing with.”

## THE PARENTS

BEFORE THE SWAT TEAMS EVER FOUND the gunmen’s bodies, investigators had already left to search the boys’ homes: the kids who had managed to flee had told them whom they should be hunting.

When they knocked on each family’s door, it was Mr. Harris and Mr. Klebold who answered. By then, news of the assault at Columbine was playing out live on TV. Mr. Harris’ first reflex was to call his wife and tell her to come home. And he called his lawyer.

The Klebolds had not been told that their son was definitely involved. They knew his car had been found in the parking lot. They knew witnesses had identified him as a gunman. They knew he was friends with Harris. And they knew he still had not come home, though it was getting late. Mr. Klebold said they had to face the facts. But neither he nor his wife was ready to accept the ugly truth, and they couldn’t believe it was happening. “This is real,” Mr. Klebold kept saying, as if he had to convince himself. “He’s involved.”

Within 10 days, the Klebolds sat down with investigators and began to answer their questions. It would be months before the same interviews would take place with the Harrises, who were seeking immunity from prosecution. District Attorney David Thomas says he has not ruled out charges. But at this point, he lacks sufficient evidence of any wrongdoing. And he is not sure whether charging the parents would do any good. “Could I really do anything to punish them anymore?”

Sheriff Stone questioned the Harrises himself. “You want to go after them. How could they not know?” says Stone. “Then you realize they are no different from the rest of us.”

Still, of all the unresolved issues about who knew what, the most serious involves Mr. Harris. Investigators have heard from former Columbine student Nathan Dykeman that Mr. Harris may once have found a pipe bomb. Nathan claims Eric Harris told him that his dad took him out and they detonated it to-

# “I’m going to kill you all. You’ve been giving us s\_\_\_\_\_ for years.”

—DYLAN KLEBOLD

gether. Nathan is a problematic witness, partly because he accepted money from tabloids after the massacre. His story also amounts to hearsay because it is based on something Harris supposedly said. Investigators have not been able to ask Mr. Harris about it either; the Harris’ lawyer put that kind of question off limits as a condition for their sitting down with investigators at all.

As for the Klebolds, Kate Battan and her sergeant, Randy West, were convinced after their interviews that the parents were fooled liked everyone else. “They were not absentee parents. They’re normal people who seem to care for their children and were involved in their life,” says Battan. They too have suffered a terrible loss, both of a child and of their trust in their instincts. On what would have been Klebold’s 18th birthday recently, Susan Klebold baked him a cake. “They don’t have victims’ advocates to help them through this,” Battan says. They do, however, have a band of devoted friends, and see one or more of them almost every day. In private, the Klebolds try to recall every interaction they had with the son they now realize they never knew: the talks, the car rides, the times they grounded him for something minor. “She wants to know all of it,” a friend says of Mrs. Klebold.

Many of the victims’ parents wish they could talk to the Klebolds and Harris, parent to parent. Donna Taylor is caring for her son Mark, 16, who took six 9-mm rounds and spent 39 days in the hospital. She has tried to make contact. “We just want to know,” she explains. “From Day One, I wanted to meet and talk with them. I mean, maybe they did watch their boys, and we’re not hearing their story.”

Throughout the videotapes, it seems as though the only people about whom the killers felt remorse were their parents. “It f\_\_\_\_\_ing sucks to do this to them,” Harris says of his parents. “They’re going to be put through hell once we do this.” And then he speaks directly to them. “There’s nothing you guys could’ve done to prevent this,” he says.

Klebold tells his mom and dad they have been “great parents” who taught him “self-awareness, self-reliance ... I always

appreciated that.” He adds, “I’m sorry I have so much rage.”

At one point Harris gets very quiet. His parents have probably noticed that he’s become distant, withdrawn lately—but it’s been for their own good. “I don’t want to spend any more time with them,” he says. “I wish they were out of town so I didn’t have to look at them and bond more.”

OVER THE MONTHS, THE POLICE HAVE KEPT the school apprised of the progress of their investigation: principal Frank DeAngelis has not seen the videotapes, but the evidence that the boys were motivated by many things has prompted some at the school to quietly claim vindication. The charge was that Columbine’s social climate was somehow so rancid, the abuse by the school’s athletes so relentless, that it drove these boys to murder. The police investigation provides the school with its best defense. “There is nowhere in any of the sheriff’s or school’s investigation of what happened that shows this was caused by jock culture,” says county school spokesman Rick Kaufman. “Both Harris and Klebold dished out as much ribbing as they received. They wanted to become cult heroes. They wanted to make a statement.”

That’s an overstatement, and it begs the question of why the boys wanted to make such an obscene statement. But many students and faculty were horrified by the way their school was portrayed after the massacre and have tried for the past eight months to correct the record. “I have asked students on occasion,” says DeAngelis, “‘The things you’ve read in the paper—is that happening? Am I just naive?’ And they’ve said, ‘Mr. DeAngelis, we don’t see it.’”

Maybe they saw the kids who flicked the ketchup packets or tossed the bottles at the trench-coat kids in the cafeteria. But things never got out of hand, they say. Evan Todd, the 255-lb. defensive lineman who was wounded in the library, describes the climate this way: “Columbine is a clean, good place except for those rejects,” Todd says of Klebold and Harris and their friends. “Most kids didn’t want them there. They were into witchcraft. They were into voodoo dolls. Sure, we teased them. But what do you expect with kids who come to school with weird hairdos and horns on

their hats? It’s not just jocks; the whole school’s disgusted with them. They’re a bunch of homos, grabbing each other’s private parts. If you want to get rid of someone, usually you tease ’em. So the whole school would call them homos, and when they did something sick, we’d tell them, ‘You’re sick and that’s wrong.’”

Others agree that the whole social-cruelty angle was overblown—just like the notion that the Trench Coat Mafia was some kind of gang, which it never was. Steven Meier, an English teacher and adviser to the school newspaper, says, “I think these kids wanted to do something that they could be famous for. Other people tend to wait until they graduate and try to make their mark in the working world and try to be famous in a positive way. I think these kids had a dismal view of life and of their own mortality. To just focus on the bullying aspect is just to focus on one small piece of the entire picture.” Meier points out that Harris’ brother, from all accounts, is a great kid. “Why would a family have one good son and one bad son?” asks Meier. “Why is it that some people turn out to be rotten?”

THE KILLERS MADE THEIR last videotape on the morning of the massacre. This is the only tape the Klebolds have seen; the Harris’ have seen none of them. First Harris holds the camera while Klebold speaks. As the camera zooms in tight, Klebold is wearing a Boston Red Sox cap, turned backward. “It’s a half-hour before our Judgment Day,” Klebold says into the camera. He wants to tell his parents goodbye. “I didn’t like life very much,” he says. “Just know I’m going to a better place than here,” he says.

He takes the camera from Harris, who begins his quick goodbye. “I know my mom and dad will be in shock and disbelief,” he says. “I can’t help it.”

Klebold interrupts. “It’s what we had to do,” he says.

Then they list some favorite CDs and other belongings that they want to will to certain friends. Klebold snaps his fingers for Harris to hurry up. Time’s running out.

“That’s it,” concludes Harris, very succinctly. “Sorry. Goodbye.” —*With reporting by Andrew Goldstein, Maureen Harrington and Richard Woodbury/Littleton*

## SPECIAL REPORT THE COLUMBINE TAPES

THE PRINCIPAL

# COULD HE HAVE DONE MORE?

**T**HE NIGHT AFTER PRINCIPAL FRANK DeAngelis lost part of his school to Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, he got no sleep. In such bleak hours, a man takes account, and DeAngelis wasn't sure he liked the results. "I feel so guilty," he told Jon DeStefano not long after morning came. "I failed myself and my community." Besides being a close friend, DeStefano is president of the school board. Now DeAngelis asked him, "How can you ever trust me with your students again?"

Since that night, DeAngelis has had to grope around in a darkness most of us will never know. The entire nation has wondered why Harris and Klebold did what they did, but imagine wondering whether you could have stopped it. The uncertainties of Columbine will be with DeAngelis forever.

Remarkably, though, those doubts haven't broken him. In a four-hour interview with *TIME*, DeAngelis said he had shaken off much of the guilt he felt that awful morning. Before he was principal, DeAngelis spent 14 years coaching football and baseball, and these days he seems like a coach again, ready for battle. "People are telling me I should have known. I'm telling you, it's inaccurate," he says. "This harassment by athletes on Eric and Dylan that has been printed time and time again—I never received a call indicating that these people were harassing them. At no time did Eric or Dylan walk into my office and say, 'Mr. DeAngelis, I'm concerned.'"

Like many principals, DeAngelis makes his school his life, a life of after-hours student baseball games and debate tournaments and art shows. These days at least, DeAngelis isn't falsely modest about this commitment: "People are saying I was out of touch with this school. I put in hours and hours and hours at extracurricular activities. I was at

the play last year when Dylan was lighting specialist ... Ask my wife how many hours I'm gone."

DeAngelis admits that harassment could have occurred without his knowing, without anyone complaining. Kids as troubled as Harris and Klebold aren't likely to stop making bombs one day and decide what they really should do is talk to an ex-jock principal about what's bugging them. And an alienated teen probably wouldn't expose his interior life during a well-attended extracurricular event. But DeAngelis says the official police report on Columbine, set for release in January, will show that the school wasn't a brutish place where cool kids humiliated outcasts every day.

That report may be gratifying, but the search for answers can leave you feeling empty. What progress DeAngelis has made in his search owes something to the support he has enjoyed in Littleton. The day after the massacre, he went to address students and parents at a local church. He felt uncertain, but when his name was announced, the place erupted in a spontaneous ovation. As he had in the past, DeAngelis told the students he loved them.

But DeAngelis remains frustrated. Sometimes he thinks about the final conversation he had with Dave Sanders, the teacher killed April 20. Both men had been coaches. They had been to each other's wedding, had kids around the same age. On April 19 they sat together at a baseball game, and their how-are-you chat turned more contemplative: the long hours they spent, the many challenges of working with teenagers—"Is all the time worth it?" they wondered. They both said yes then. And DeAngelis says yes now.—**By John Cloud and Andrew Goldstein/Littleton**



## SPECIAL REPORT THE COLUMBINE TAPES

VIEWPOINT ■ James Garbarino

# SOME KIDS ARE ORCHIDS

**M**OST OF US THINK WE KNOW THE KIND OF KID WHO BECOMES A KILLER, AND most of the time we're right. Boys commit about 85% of all youth homicides, and in those cases about 90% conform to a pattern in which the line from bad parenting and bad environment to murder is usually clear. Through my work, I see these boys and young men in the courtroom and in prison with depressing regularity. Their lives start with abuse, neglect and emotional deprivation at home. Add the effects of racism, poverty, the drug and gang cultures, and it is not surprising that in a violent society like ours, damaged children become deadly teens.

But what about the other 10% of kids who kill: the boys who have loving parents and are not poor? What about boys like Dylan Klebold or Eric Harris, or Kip Kinkel of Springfield, Ore., who killed his parents and two schoolmates in 1998? Are their parents to blame when these kids become killers? I have learned as a researcher and an expert witness in youth homicide cases that the answer is usually no.

Most children are like dandelions; they thrive if given half a chance. Some are more like orchids. They do fine while young enough to be nurtured by loving parents, but wilt as adolescents subjected to peer competition, bullying and rejection, particularly in big high schools. Research shows that while only 10% of children who are born temperamentally "easy" have adjustment problems in elementary school, 70% of those who are "difficult" temperamentally have such problems. And while most fragile children do fine in early childhood, 50% have significant difficulties once they enter adolescence. Then children respond to the influence of peers and the larger culture in the neighborhood and the nation. The U.S. youth homicide rate is about 10 times higher than in Canada.

The "normal" culture of adolescence today contains elements that are so nasty that it becomes hard for parents (and professionals) to distinguish between what in a teenager's talk, dress and taste in music, films and video games indicates psychological trouble and what is simply a sign of the times. Most kids who subscribe to the trench-coated Goth lifestyle, or have multiple body piercings, or listen to Marilyn Manson, or play the video game Doom are normal kids caught in a toxic culture.

Intelligent kids with good social skills can be quite skillful at hiding who they really are from their parents. They may do this to avoid punishment, to escape being identified as "crazy," or to protect the parents they love from being disappointed or worried. In the wake of his shooting rampage, Kip Kinkel reported that he had been hearing voices but didn't tell anyone. Klebold successfully hid his inner turmoil from his loving parents. Anyway, how many parents are capable of thinking the worst of their son—for example, that he harbors murderous fantasies, or that he could go so far as acting them out? Even if parents know their child as an individual, they may not understand what he is capable of when in the company of another boy. Though it appears from public accounts that Harris was more prone to violence than Klebold, neither kid was likely to go on this rampage alone.

I think many of us are too ready to blame good parents for how their children cope with a violent and coarse society. Even loving, attentive parents can lose children who are temperamentally vulnerable—if they develop a secret life, get caught up in the dark side of the culture and form dangerous peer alliances. And that's scary for any parent to acknowledge.

*Garbarino is professor of human development at Cornell University and is author of Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them*

# THE VICTIMS: NEVER AGAIN

**Although often overcome by tears, many Columbine victims' families are determined not to be overwhelmed by rage**

By **ANDREW GOLDSTEIN** LITTLETON

**F**OR SOME OF THE FAMILIES OF THE dead children of Columbine, the very idea of “closure” is an insult and a hoax. There can never be closure for them. “To say that we want to move on and put this behind us, that’s not true,” says Brian Rohrbough, whose son Daniel was among the first to die. There is still too much pain and too many questions, and even if the answers come, their children will never come back, and nothing will be the same again.

And so, he is still burning. His rage starts with the killers. Rohrbough is the one who took down the two crosses meant to commemorate the shooters alongside the victims. But he has other culprits in his sights. “For 20 minutes the Jefferson sheriff knew absolutely where Klebold and Harris were in the building,” he says. “For 20 minutes they listened to them murdering children, and they did absolutely nothing.” As for the school, he charges, “jocks could get away with anything. If they wanted to punch a kid in the mouth and walk away, they could. Had I known this, my son wouldn’t have been there. They did nothing to protect students from each other.”

At a glance it would be easy to conclude that the Columbine community is still shattered in pieces—angry, frightened, heartbroken. On the six-month anniversary of the shooting in October, a Columbine senior threatened to “finish the job” started by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, and hundreds of panicked parents kept their kids home from school. Some fired off angry letters saying that when it comes to the safety of their kids, the school is still “in denial.” Two days later, Carla Hochhalter, the mother of Anne Marie, who was paralyzed in the April 20 shootings, walked into the Alpha Pawn Shop, asked to see a gun and shot herself. Michael Shoels, whose son Isaih was murdered, appeared at a rally with Al Sharpton, ranting against the killers’ parents and the police. “I’m as angry as the day it happened,” says Shoels. And 18 families filed notices of intent to sue the school district, the sheriff’s office or both.

But beneath all the public outrage, there are signs that most of the victims of Columbine have been quietly piecing their

lives back together. The victims’ families have written thousands of thank-you notes, have created scholarships in the names of their children, and are trying to raise money to build a new library. Students and teachers have managed to have a relatively normal school year, and many are using April 20 as inspiration to rethink the way they treat their peers. All say they are committed to finding ways to ensure that a tragedy like this doesn’t happen again, anywhere.

Even the growing pile of potential lawsuits is not what it appears. The families insist they are less interested in blame or recompense, than simply answers. A few do need money because of mounting medical bills. Expenses for Richard Castaldo, who is paralyzed from the waist down, could top \$1 million. Mark Taylor, who has had four operations and faces a long, painful road to recovery, needed an \$1,800 therapeutic mattress, but his HMO refused to pay for it, and the family had to find other means. “If the insurance companies aren’t doing their job,” asks Donna Taylor, “then what are we supposed to do but sue?”

Most families filed intents to sue simply because the sheriff’s office had not yet finished its report by the time Colorado’s 180-day deadline to file such intents came, and the families wanted to keep their options open in case the report fails to answer the questions that have haunted them since April. Why didn’t the police or the school pick up on the killers’ warning signs? Why, once the carnage began, didn’t the police move in faster? “We’d love to know exactly what happened,” says Darcey Ruegsegger, whose daughter Kacey is recovering from a shotgun wound in the back. “Not to blame, but just to know. If there were mistakes made, then by learning perhaps we can prevent something like this from happening again.”

On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, many of the victims’ families gathered at St. Luke’s Church for their monthly potluck dinner. Few of these families had even met before April 20, but the tragedy has brought them together. “They’re my family now,” says Don Fleming. “They have become our closest friends.” They sit around, tell stories and support one another. After

Carla Hochhalter killed herself, Ted Hochhalter was left to care for Anne Marie by himself. The parents of Corey DePooter, who was killed at Columbine, gave the Hochhalters a freezer they had received as a gift, and they—along with other families of the dead—stocked it with food.

With the pain of the six-month anniversary behind them, the families were finding joy in taking baby steps: Kacey Ruegsegger, who was a world-class quarter-horse rider before the blast shattered her right arm and shoulder, is back in the saddle again, competing even though after bone transplants and three operations she still might never have full use of her arm. Richard Castaldo, whose eight gunshot wounds left him a paraplegic, has spent four months in the hospital and suffered through seven operations, but now he’s back at Columbine. Every day a special lift hoists Richard and his black wheelchair into the big yellow Bluebird school bus that can seat 72 passengers but is reserved just for him; Richard plans to graduate with his class in June.

Families that kept their dead children’s rooms locked up since April 20 have finally begun to open the doors: Dee Fleming goes inside her daughter Kelly’s room with Kelly’s friends, listens to stories about her daughter and invites the girls to take home special keepsakes. The Mausers had always slept with their son Daniel’s door closed, but since summer they’ve kept it open. Patricia Depooter takes comfort in going into her son’s room, gazing at his clothes and shoes as he left them that April morning, and even taking an occasional whiff of his cologne.

It’s still hard for Linda Sanders to talk about her husband Dave, the much loved teacher and coach who died while heralding kids to safety, without welling up with tears. By the end of November, she still had not gone back to the campus. Every time she had been inside the school, she was walking with Dave or going to pick him up or watch him coach. Returning, she feared, would destroy all those positive memories. But last week was the opening game for the girls’ basketball team, which Dave had coached. The girls from the team have regularly stopped by Linda’s house with gifts or just to talk and keep her company. So

## SPECIAL REPORT THE COLUMBINE TAPES

Linda decided to support the girls on opening night. “It was definitely a big step for me,” she says. “But I know I wasn’t alone. I was with Dave every step of the way.” The girls went out and won handily, for Linda and for coach Sanders.

The families at the potluck gathering were putting together laundry baskets for the needy. They filled 40 baskets—donated by the Denver Foundation—with clothing, food, soap and lotions, and drove them to shelters and charities. “This is a club nobody wants to join,” says Bob Curnow, whose 14-year-old son Steven was killed, “but now we need to be role models, to create something positive out of all that’s happened.”

And they are. Patricia DePooter, whose son Corey had always wanted to be a Marine, helps the Corps collect toys and other gifts for impoverished kids. Linda Sanders, who says all the support from across the nation “has restored my faith in humanity,” has written 1,700 thank-you cards, but she’s worried she’s missed some people. Next fall the Mausers plan to adopt a baby girl from China.

And together, many of the victims’ families have formed the HOPE (Healing of People Everywhere) library fund. Last week the families announced HOPE’s campaign to raise at least \$3.1 million to build a new library adjacent to the school and to tear away the floor of the existing library to create a stunning two-story atrium with a view of the Rockies. “The library is a kind of sanctuary. It was the heart and soul of the school,” says Don Fleming. “How could you go in and concentrate, knowing that 10 kids were murdered there?”

In early November, several of the victims’ families came together under different circumstances to testify at the sentencing hearing of Mark Manes, the 22-year-old acquaintance of Klebold’s and Harris’ who bought Dylan’s semiautomatic Tec-9. With their suicide pact, Harris and Klebold had cheated their victims of a day in court, so this hearing might be the only chance for the families to describe in a court of law what they’ve been through. Representatives from nine families spoke, and the sto-

ries of suffering were so wrenching that several people had to leave the courtroom and a clerk had to get three extra boxes of tissues. When Manes was finally escorted out of the courtroom in handcuffs, sentenced to six years in prison, the families clapped. It wasn’t much, but it was the first sense of justice they had got since April.

At the hearing, Tom Mauser was the only speaker who did not focus on the loss of his son. Instead, Mauser talked about guns. “I want you to consider,” he told the courtroom, “that we lose an average of 13 young lives every day to gunshots. Every day. Every day.”

Two weeks before the shootings, Daniel Mauser came home from school and asked his parents if they knew about the loopholes in the Brady Bill. Looking back, says Mauser, “that was a sign.” His fight against gun violence is his way of honoring Daniel’s memory. Mauser protested the N.R.A. convention held in Denver two weeks after the shootings; he picketed the offices of Colorado’s U.S. Senators Wayne Allard and Ben Nighthorse Campbell after they voted to keep background checks at gun shows voluntary; and he’s joined the Bell Campaign, a group that lobbies against gun violence. “There’s something wrong with a country when a kid can get a gun so easily and shoot that gun into the face of another kid, like my child,” says Mauser. “Unfortunately it looks like it’s going to take a lot more of these tragedies for real change to occur.”

Students at Columbine don’t want to wait that long. Eleven of them—their backgrounds as diverse as can be hoped for in this mostly white, Abercrombie and Fitch community—spend an hour one morning sitting around the conference table in the front office. They’re brainstorming about what they’ve learned from their tragedy, and what they plan to do so that it never happens again. “I don’t tease my friends as much as I used to,” says freshman Kent Van Zant. “I try to be a lot nicer now to everybody.”

Senior Joel Kuhns, who was in Harris’ video class last year, says that this year, “a lot of seniors have been more open to people, even to underclassmen. This is the class

that they’re going to look at to see what happened afterward. I just think that’s a huge responsibility for us, and we’re doing a pretty good job of it.” Adds Lindsey White, who serves in the senior senate: “There are still cliques. You’re going to get that no matter what. But more people are willing to talk to other people they don’t usually talk to.”

All summer, principal Frank DeAngelis has been listening. He spent July and August serving on two school-safety task forces, reviewing everything from metal detectors to dress codes to having four or five armed officers patrol school grounds. “I’m not sure if that’s the answer,” says DeAngelis. “I think where money needs to be spent is educating our students about tolerance, about respecting one another, about communication.” While Columbine High School did add an additional campus supervisor this year, along with 16 security cameras and a keyless entry system, DeAngelis is most proud of Columbine’s efforts at prevention: the Links program that pairs upperclassmen with incoming freshmen; the emphasis on “zero tolerance” of threats and harassment; the hiring by the school district of Jackson Katz, a consultant who speaks to coaches and athletes about using their status to be role models, and the peer-counselor program, in which senior leaders can help identify students in need of support. At Columbine’s opening-day rally in August, DeAngelis urged all students “who don’t feel part of the Columbine family” to come to his office and let him know why.

In September a Columbine student expressed to victim parent Bob Curnow what many of her peers were feeling. “I just want everything to get back to normal,” she said. Curnow told her: “I understand what you’re feeling. But you need to know that normal, before April 20, will never occur to you again. You need to redefine what normal is with this event as part of your life.” And so it is with everyone in this community, and maybe in the nation too. We suffer through tragedies, we grieve, and we try to learn.

—With reporting by Maureen Harrington and Richard Woodbury/Littleton

“I came home from school. I will be able to pass that test. I will be able to keep daydreaming. I will be able to graduate, and I am still alive.”

—COURTNEY SHAKOWSKI,  
writer for Columbine yearbook



# AN ACT OF GOD?

The family of Rachel Scott believes she died at Columbine to spark a spiritual revival among youth

By **S.C. GWYNNE** LITTLE ROCK

**D**ARRELL SCOTT IS TIRED. SINCE HIS daughter Rachel was murdered at Columbine High eight months ago, Darrell, 50, has left his job as a sales manager for a food company, and now lives on the road, speaking at churches, stadiums and high school gyms from Dallas to Bismarck. He takes Dramamine for motion sickness and eats in Cracker Barrel restaurants. It might seem like a dreary existence, reliving your daughter's death over and over. But while others in Littleton still seethe with anger, Darrell and his family have found deliverance from despair. To them Rachel's death was a Christian martyrdom—an act of God meant to spark a spiritual revolution in young people.

This conviction has brought Darrell's family, including his ex-wife, together in a ministry they call the Columbine Redemption. The message is powerful: in London, Ky., a town of 7,000, fully 5,500 people showed up to hear Darrell speak. That was a jaw dropper, but he regularly draws crowds of more than 3,000. "God is using this tragedy to wake up not only America but also the world," Darrell told a Christian group in Little Rock in November. "God is using Rachel as a vehicle. If I believed for one second that God had forsaken my daughter or that he had gone to sleep or that he wasn't aware, I would be one of the angriest men in America."

Instead, Darrell believes Rachel's death was meant to be. He believes this because of the eerily prophetic journals Rachel kept, as well as a number of "visions" experienced by others that prove, say the Scotts, that the killings at Columbine were "a spiritual event."

The voluminous journals, which her parents discovered only after her death, and which contain poetry, letters to God and drawings, convey Rachel's belief that she was not going to live to see adulthood, and that God was going to use her for some purpose. On May 2, 1998, she wrote, "This will be my last year, Lord. I have gotten what I can. Thank you." On another occasion she wrote, "God is going to use me to reach the young people, I don't know how, I don't

know when." Her last diary entry, written 20 minutes before she died, was a drawing of a pair of eyes crying; from the eyes fell 13 drops onto a rose—images Darrell says had been described to him in an earlier phone call from a man he did not know.

Among the many stories about Rachel was one that first appeared in a local Christian newspaper, saying she had been asked if she believed in God and had answered yes before Eric Harris shot her. The account was credited to Richard Castaldo, the now paralyzed boy who was having lunch with Rachel when she died. The Scott family believes this account. But in an interview with *TIME* last week, Castaldo denied telling the story. Darrell, who agrees that Castaldo would be the only plausible source of such a story, says, "I'm surprised. If he said that, then either it didn't happen or he changed his story."

Darrell, former pastor of a 300-member church in Lakewood, Colo., first came to prominence with an appearance before the House Judiciary Committee in May after the Columbine killings. He declared the answer to school violence "lies not in gun laws" but in a "simple trust in God." His message resonated strongly with Christian groups. Soon he was deluged with speaking engagements. And he invited his daughters Bethanee, 24, and Dana, 22, as well as his ex-wife (Rachel's mother) Beth Nimmo, to become full-time members of the Columbine Redemption. Beth and Dana speak to groups; Bethanee answers mail and runs the Littleton office. Darrell's fiancé Sandy will be joining him on the road after their Jan. 30 wedding.

In spite of their shatterproof belief that Rachel did not die in vain, the last eight months have been difficult for the Scott family. Craig Scott, Rachel's 16-year-old brother, who was kneeling next to Isaiah Shoels and Matt Kechter when they were shot to death in the library, has had the hardest time. Though he has on occasion spoken to groups with Darrell, he refuses to return to Columbine High and is being schooled by a county home-tutoring program. "Some days he can't get out of bed," says his mother Beth.

It was Craig who first identified Cassie

Bernall as the girl in the library who said she believed in God just before she was shot. When police later took Craig back to the library, he pointed forward, to the place where he had heard the question asked. His face turned ashen when he realized that Cassie had been sitting at a table behind him. One policeman said he thought Craig was going to vomit. The girl who actually said the words Craig heard, according to witnesses interviewed by police, was Valeen Schnurr.

Members of the Scott family say every atom of their lives has been rearranged since Columbine. "Things I did before, like shopping or going to movies or eating out, seem frivolous now," says Bethanee. Beth says, "Things don't mean much anymore. They bring no joy or comfort. It's only people now. And even my friends have changed." Darrell spends hours at Rachel's grave when he is not on the road, indulging in the tears he can't afford to shed on the podium. "The biggest thing I do for him is just listen to him cry and talk about her," says friend Wayne Worthy of Springfield, Mo., who helps with the new ministry.

Darrell is also pushing ahead with his vision of a large youth ministry based on his daughter's life and journals. He has become a prominent advocate of reinstating prayer in schools. He has stepped up his fund raising—he earns about \$1,500 for the ministry each time he speaks—and in December brought out the first issue of a magazine called *Rachel's Journal*. He wants to build a combined Columbine memorial and Christian youth center that would focus on teaching and training young people from around the country. And he wants to build a 200-ft.-high cross somewhere in the area.

The big question is whether the Columbine tragedy has spiritual legs. "We all realize that at some point the Columbine story is not going to be as strong as it was," says Pastor Billy Epperhart of Littleton, a close friend of the Scotts'. "There has to be something that is bigger than Columbine. The question is, What does it look like for Darrell's life?" Right now it just looks busy: he has speaking engagements booked through the end of the year 2000. —*With reporting by Timothy Roche/Littleton*

## SPECIAL REPORT THE COLUMBINE TAPES

THE POLITICS

# ENTER THE BIG GUNS

The feds threaten gunmakers with a huge lawsuit, and most can't afford not to talk settlement

**E**IGHT MONTHS AFTER COLUMBINE—AND only one day after the small Oklahoma town of Fort Gibson became the latest stage for an apple-cheeked boy to open fire on his schoolmates—the gun industry faced its biggest threat, the one that could finally force major changes in the way firearms are made and marketed.

On Tuesday, the Clinton Administration said it was preparing to file a class action on behalf of the nation's 3,191 public-housing authorities. Twenty-nine cities and counties have already filed suits against the manufacturers since October of last year, seeking to recover the public costs of gun violence, force the design of safer firearms, and restrict the flow of guns to illegitimate buyers. As the suits have made their way through the courts, the industry and plaintiffs have held sporadic settlement talks, to little effect. But that could change dramatically with the arrival of the feds, who will throw their weight behind the plaintiffs' demands. The plaintiffs want gunmakers to distribute only to dealers who won't sell at gun shows, to require that dealers sell only one gun a month per buyer, to cut off those who sell a disproportionate number of guns linked to crimes, and to make the industry develop "smart" guns that only their owners can use.

The feds and the plaintiffs say they're not after big money, not yet anyway. And that's one reason the gunmakers might yield: if there's no a settlement, the feds will be asking for compensation. The public-housing authorities spend about \$1 billion a year trying to keep their 3.3 million residents safe from gun violence, according to the De-

partment of Housing and Urban Development. The department hasn't decided how much to ask for in damages, but the number would be hefty—and added to what the 29 cities and counties are seeking in their lawsuits, the gunmakers face potential exposure running into the billions. Their pockets are not really as deep as those of the tobacco industry, which has faced a similar siege, and many of their insurers have said they won't pay to defend the lawsuits.

The attack on the gunmakers, is patterned closely on the tobacco campaign and even involves some of the same lawyers. But the federal role is different this time. When the government finally sued the tobacco companies last September, it was more than a year after the states had concluded a far-reaching settlement with the industry. This time the feds are jumping in when they can make a difference, even after a year when Congress did nothing to further gun control. Some manufacturers, like Glock, said last week they would consider meeting with the Clinton Administration, while others—notably Sturm, Ruger & Co., the largest gunmaker—indicated they plan to fight it out.

In any case, the lawsuits have caused a rift between some gunmakers and the National Rifle Association, which cares more about the principles involved than the economics. Gunmakers point out that they are the ones being sued, not the N.R.A. Says Robert Delfay, head of the manufacturers' trade group: "If the day comes when we have to do something the N.R.A. doesn't approve of, we'll tell them and so be it." —By **Viveca Novak/Washington**

# SCORECARD OF HATRED

**MAY 13, 1999**



RALPH W. POLOVICH—TIMES HERALD/AP

**FOILED**

**Port Huron, Mich.**

Their plan, police said, was to outdo Columbine perpetrators Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold by arming themselves, forcing the principal of Holland Woods Middle School to call an assembly and then killing teachers, classmates and themselves. Jedaiah (David) Zinzo and Justin Schnepf, both 14, made a list of 154 targets, stole a building plan from the school custodian's office and plotted to use one gun to steal more. Classmates caught wind of the plot and reported it to the assistant principal. Zinzo and Schnepf were sentenced to four years' probation.

**MAY 19, 1999**

**FOILED**

**Anaheim, Calif.**

When police searched the homes of two eighth-graders at South Junior High, they found two bombs, bombmaking materials, a military-surplus rifle, a Ruger Blackhawk .45-cal. handgun, 1,500 rounds of ammunition and Nazi paraphernalia. They were tipped off by a student who heard that the boys, whose names were not released, were threatening to blow up the school.

**MAY 20, 1999**



RICK CRUMBLEY—AP

**Conyers, Ga.**

Thomas Solomon Jr., 15, aimed low with his stepfather's .22 rifle and wounded six fellow students at Heritage High School.

**WARNING SIGNS**

Solomon told classmates he would "blow up this classroom" and had no reason to live. He was being treated for depression and was teased by a popular sports player whom Solomon believed was the object of his girlfriend's affections.

**AUG. 24, 1999**

**FOILED**

**Northeast Florida**

Two teenagers were charged with conspiracy to commit second-degree murder after a teacher saw drawings, one of which depicted a bloody knife, a shotgun and an assault weapon. The teens allegedly described themselves as Satan worshippers and claimed they were planning to leave a deadlier trail than the one at Columbine. Charges were dropped for lack of evidence, and the boys were released from house arrest.

**OCT. 28, 1999**



THE PLAIN DEALER

**FOILED**

**Cleveland, Ohio**

Adam Gruber, 14, above, and John Borowski, Benjamin Balducci and Andy Napier, all 15, were white students planning a rampage at their mostly black school. It was to end, one of the boys' friends said, in a suicidal shoot-out with police, with one survivor to "bask in the glory." Officials were tipped off to the plot by another student's mother.

**OCT. 24, 2000**

**Glendale, Ariz.**

Sean Botkin dressed in camouflage, went to his old school, entered a math class and with a 9-mm handgun held hostage 32 former classmates and a teacher, police say. After an hour, the 14-year-old was persuaded to surrender.

**WARNING SIGNS**

Botkin said in a television interview last month that he was picked on, hated school, had a troubled family life and couldn't recall ever being truly happy. "Using a gun would get the attention more than just walking into school and saying, 'I need help' or something," he said.

**JAN. 10, 2001**



BRYAN CHAN—LOS ANGELES TIMES

**Oxnard, Calif.**

Richard Lopez, 17, had a history of mental illness, and police apparently believe he "had his mind made up to be killed by a police officer" when he marched onto the grounds of his old school, Hueneme High, took a girl hostage and held a gun to her head. Within five minutes of SWAT officers' arriving, he was shot dead. Lopez's sister said her brother had wanted to commit suicide, but his Catholic faith forbade it.

**WARNING SIGNS**

Family members said Lopez had been in and out of juvenile facilities and attempted suicide three times. "He needed help, and I cried out for it," his grandmother said.

**JAN. 29, 2001**



PAUL SAKUMA—AP

**FOILED**

**Cupertino, Calif.**

The Columbine gunmen were "the only thing that's real," according to De Anza College sophomore Al Joseph DeGuzman, 19. He allegedly planned to attack the school with guns and explosive devices. The day before, however, he apparently photographed himself with his arsenal and took the film for developing. The drugstore clerk alerted police.

**FEB. 5, 2001**

**FOILED**

**Hoyt, Kans.**

Police were alerted to Richard B. Bradley Jr., 18, Jason L. Moss, 17, and James R. Lopez, 16, by an anonymous hot-line tip. A search of their homes revealed bombmaking material, school floor plans, a rifle, ammunition and white supremacist drawings, police said. They also reportedly found three black trench coats similar to those worn by the Columbine gunmen.

**FEB. 7, 2001**

**FOILED**

**Fort Collins, Colo.**

Just 66 miles from Littleton, Chad Meiniger, 15, and Alexander Vukodinovich and Scott Parent, both 14, were allegedly hatching an elaborate plan to "redo Columbine." Police were tipped off by two female classmates of the boys, who said they had overheard them plotting. Officers say they found a weapons cache, ammunition and sketches of the school.



AP (3)





# IN THE TWO YEARS SINCE COLUMBINE, AMERICA'S SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN PLAGUED BY NEW ATTACKS. OTHER PLOTS WERE QUASHED AS STUDENTS TOOK THREATS MORE SERIOUSLY

**NOV. 19, 1999**

**Deming, N.M.**  
Victor Cordova Jr., 12, fired one shot into the lobby of Deming Middle School and hit Araceli Tena, 13, in the back of the head. She died the next day.

**WARNING SIGNS**  
Cordova reportedly boasted the day before the shooting that he would "make history blasting this school," but no adults were told. Since losing his mother to cancer, Cordova was reportedly suicidal.



ROSE PALMISANO—AP

**DEC. 6, 1999**

**Fort Gibson, Okla.**  
Seventh-grader Seth Trickey was a religious, straight-A student. But then, police say, he came to school, stood under a tree, pulled out his father's 9-mm semiautomatic handgun and fired at least 15 rounds into a group of classmates. Four were wounded.

**WARNING SIGNS**  
A juvenile court heard that Trickey was receiving psychological counseling and was deeply influenced by the Columbine shootings. Psychologists said he was obsessed with the military, in particular General George S. Patton, and the shootings may have been Trickey's way of proving he could hold his own in battle.

**FEB. 29, 2000**



THE FLINT JOURNAL/LAISON

**Mount Morris Township, Mich.**  
A six-year-old boy, whose identity has not been released, left the crack house where he lived and went to school at Theo J. Buell Elementary. He called out to fellow first-grader Kayla Rolland, left, "I don't like you!" "So?" she said. The boy swung around and shot her with

the loaded .32 semiautomatic handgun he had taken from home. Kayla died soon afterward.

**WARNING SIGNS**  
The boy was reportedly made to stay after school nearly every day for violent behavior, attacking other children and cursing. His hellish home life—mother a drug addict, father in prison—had been the subject of complaints to police, but there was no response. On the day of the shooting, another student reported the boy was carrying a knife. It was confiscated, but he was not searched for other weapons.

**MAY 18, 2000**

**FOILED**

**Millbrae, Calif.**  
A 17-year-old senior at Mills High School, whose name has not been released, was arrested after another student reported being threatened with a gun. Police said they found an arsenal of 15 guns and rifles, knives and ammunition at the boy's home, all apparently belonging to his father. In the eight months before his arrest, the boy had allegedly threatened seven other friends with guns and bragged he was going to "do a Columbine" at school. The victims said they were too scared to report the threats.

**MAY 26, 2000**



JONES—PALM BEACH POST

**Lake Worth, Fla.**  
Nathaniel Brazill, 13, was sent home for throwing water balloons. Police say he returned with a .25-cal. semiautomatic handgun, went into an English class and shot and killed teacher Barry Grunow, 35.

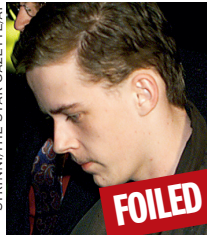
**WARNING SIGNS**  
Brazill had apparently shown others the gun and talked about hit lists. In his bedroom, police say they found a letter he had written saying, "I think I might commit suicide."

**FEB. 11, 2001**

**FOILED**

**Palm Harbor, Fla.**  
Scott McClain, a 14-year-old eighth-grader, reportedly wrote a detailed e-mail to at least one friend describing his plans to make a bomb and possibly target a specific teacher at Palm Harbor Middle School. The friend's mother alerted sheriff's deputies, who said they found a partly assembled bomb in McClain's bedroom that would have had a "kill radius" of 15 ft.

**FEB. 14, 2001**



STRINNI/THE STAR-GAZETTE/AP

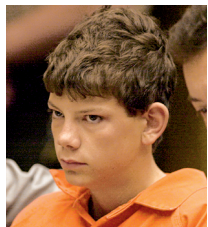
**FOILED**

**Elmira, N.Y.**  
Jeremy Getman, an 18-year-old senior, passed a disturbing note to a friend, who alerted authorities. A police officer found Getman in Southside High School's cafeteria, reportedly with a .22-cal. Ruger semiautomatic and a duffel bag containing 18 bombs and a sawed-off shotgun. An additional eight bombs were allegedly found in his home.

**MARCH 5, 2001**

**Santee, Calif.**  
Charles Andrew Williams, 15, allegedly opened fire from a bathroom at Santana High, killing two and wounding 13.

**WARNING SIGNS**  
Williams was bullied, a pot smoker, trying to fit in. He told at least a dozen people, including one adult, that there would be a shoot-out. When he later said he was joking, they believed him.



NANCIE E. LEWIS—AP

**MARCH 7, 2001**

**Williamsport, Pa.**  
Elizabeth Catherine Bush, 14, was threatened and teased mercilessly at her old school in Jersey Shore and transferred last spring to Bishop Neumann, a small Roman Catholic school. There she allegedly took her father's revolver into the cafeteria and shot Kimberly Marchese in the shoulder.

**WARNING SIGNS**  
Bush was reportedly still being teased and was depressed. As she fired the gun, she allegedly said, "No one thought I would go through with this." It is unclear whether she had told anyone of her intentions.

**MARCH 7, 2001**



CARLOS CHAVEZ—THE DESERT SUN/AP

**FOILED**

**Twentynine Palms, Calif.**  
Cori Aragon, left, with her mother, was one of 16 students at Monument High School in the Mojave Desert to discover that their names were allegedly on the hit list of two 17-year-old boys arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to commit murder and civil rights violations. Tipped off by a female student who overheard the boys' plans, police said they found a rifle in one home, the list in the other. The boys' names were not released. This was the most serious case to follow the Santee shootings. But 14 other California children were either arrested or under observation for making threats. Around the U.S., dozens more copycat threats were reported. —By Amanda Bower