

T T A E



The Columbine Effect

- Inside the mind of the California teen killer
- Confronting the classroom code of silence
- Why some kids snap—and others don't

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"IT'S ONLY ME,"

said the boy with the gun, as he surrendered to sheriffs in the boys' bathroom. If only that were true. In the 48 hours after Charles Andrew Williams shot up his high school in Santee, Calif., 16 more kids in California were arrested or detained for making threats or taking guns to school. An 11-year-old in Higley, Ariz., threatened to kill the girl he liked and the boy who had kissed her. He told police that he got the idea from news reports and was only kidding. Another 11-year-old, in Phoenix was arrested after threatening to shoot a teacher's tape player and then the teacher. He apparently did not like the teacher's "obnoxious music." Elizabeth Bush, the eighth-grader in Williamsport, Pa., who dreamed of becoming either a human-rights activist or a nun, shot the head cheerleader in the cafeteria. "No one thought I would go through with this," she yelled as she fired her .22.

It's not only Andy Williams.

A reasonable person who read the papers or watched the news last week might conclude that murderous violence could happen anywhere, at any time, in any school in America. The one thing that nearly every school shooting has in common is the chorus of parents declaring that "I never thought it could happen here." That's not because they know the statistics—that youth violence is dropping, that schools are getting safer, that fewer than 1% of teen gun-related deaths occur in schools—it's because many of us float our children off to school in a bubble, grateful to live in a wholesome town—"We are America," Santee Mayor Randy Voepel declared—and unwilling to admit that the danger could follow us no matter where we go.

Don't look for a pattern; by the time you find it, you will find a counterargument wrapped around it. Is it the absence of parents, the presence of guns, the cruelty of the culture, the culture of cruelty? School shootings are like plane crashes, rare but riveting for the primitive fears they evoke. Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, the executioners of Columbine, gave that fear a face: cold-blooded, calculating, seeking immortality, dancing with the devil. They gave our kids the awful shorthand: You're not going to do a Columbine? Williams' friends asked. They even frisked him that morning before school.

In a spasm of fear and frustration, the adults fire back at a moving target. Last week politicians went after the tormentors: in Washington State the senate passed a law requiring school officials to investigate—and notify parents about—incidents of bullying on their campuses. Police went after negligent parents: in Indianapolis, Calvin and Shawnee Sistrunk were charged with felony neglect after their six-year-old daughter arrived at kindergarten with a loaded handgun. She wanted to show it to her friends. The culture cracked down on itself: on Friday night KGTV, an ABC affiliate in San Diego, televised the memorial service for Williams' victims; then, for roughly 35 minutes, it dropped its regular programming and showed only a text message urging parents to turn off the TV and spend time talking to their kids.

Those are the conversations that matter most. Given the agony that Williams inflicted on his victims, it is awkward even to discuss the agony he was in. Some friends came to his defense, talked about how badly he had been treated, how the bullies stole his skateboard, stole even the shoes off his feet. Was there, this time, a measure of pity for a lost boy, who seemed to have had nowhere to go, who wore a silver necklace with the word MOUSE on it, who called at least three of his friends' mothers Mom, who in the end seemed to want nothing more than to be taken seriously and to be taken, at last, into somebody's custody?

One night recently police came upon Williams in the park with several huge bottles of beer. "They just told me to go home," he told friends later. His buddies heard him Saturday night, when he got drunk at a bonfire, talk about taking a gun to school and shooting the place up. "I'll show you one day," he said. When it was over, when the police came to take him away, wrapping him in that oversize white jumpsuit, no one heard him say anything about being sorry. And no one heard him ask for anyone, not even his mom or dad.

BY NANCY GIBBS



YOUNG KILLER:
Once again, a lost
boy shoots up his
school and rattles
our psyches

WARNING:

ANDY WILLIAMS HERE. UNHAPPY KID. TIRED OF BEING PICKED ON. READY TO BLOW. WANT TO KILL SOME PEOPLE. CAN ANYBODY HEAR ME? HOW DID THINGS GET SO BAD?

By **TERRY MCCARTHY** SANTEE

AFTER ANDY WILLIAMS, 15, WAS arrested for opening fire on his classmates in Santee, Calif., last week, his mother Linda Williams wept before a TV crew and said, "He's lost. His future's gone." No grownup in his life seems to have been looking out for that future before the shooting. Charles Andrew Williams had been a lost boy for some time—hopelessly adrift in a dysfunctional, anonymous suburban landscape, craving acceptance but too often meeting rejection instead.

His schoolmates bullied him. His mother rarely saw him. His father neglected him. Even his friends taunted him—and may well have goaded him into his shooting rampage. A Williams associate told *TIME* that more than two months before the attack, one of the boy's closest friends boasted that Williams had taken one of his father's guns and hidden it in bushes behind a park they frequented. The weekend before, when Williams began saying that he was going to "pull a Columbine" on Santana High, two of his friends called him a "pussy" and dared him to do it.

Others were sufficiently concerned to pat down his clothing in search of a gun on Monday morning before he entered the school. But nobody said anything to the school authorities. At 9:20 a.m. on Monday, Williams took out a .22 re-

volver—secreted either in his trousers or in his yellow backpack—in the boys' bathroom of the school and started firing, first into the room and then into an adjacent courtyard. Many students initially thought it was fireworks and moved toward the popping sounds until they saw others falling wounded to the ground.

San Diego County sheriff's deputies, who responded rapidly to the first emer-



THE DEAD: Gordon, left, dreamed of joining the Navy, Zuckor of becoming a stunt man

gency calls, cornered Williams in the bathroom. He handed over his weapon, which had been reloaded and was cocked to fire again. Six minutes of shooting and 30 rounds left Bryan Zuckor, 14, and Randy Gordon, 17, fatally wounded and 13 others hit. It was the worst school shooting in the U.S. since the Columbine massacre two years ago.

As the town of Santee buried the two dead children last weekend, parents, teachers and counselors were struggling

to understand what had turned the baby-faced Williams into a stoned, smirking gunman who had changed their life forever. Doctors said all 13 wounded victims were set to make full recoveries. But slowly Santee started to learn things about itself that it didn't like to hear—that despite street names such as Peaceful Court and Carefree Drive, it was far from the idyllic, pacific suburb that many of the adults in Santee imagined. "There's a lot of hate around here," says Gentry Robler, 16, a sophomore at Santana High. He reels off the high school cliques: the gothics, the freaks, the dorks, the jocks, the Mexican gangsters, the white supremacists. "This is a school that was waiting for something like this to happen." But who would have guessed that it would be the skinny, jug-eared, timid freshman wearing a silver necklace with the name *MOUSE* on it who would make this happen?

Williams came to California less than two years ago from a town in rural Maryland. After a spell in the town of Twentynine Palms, his dad got a job as a lab technician for the Naval Medical Center in San Diego, and the two moved to Santee (pop. 58,000). Williams was instantly picked on by the bigger, more streetwise kids there. Laura Kennamer, a friend of Andy's, saw kids burning their lighters and then pressing the hot metal against his neck. "They'd walk up to him and sock him in the face for no reason," she says. "He wouldn't do anything about it." Jennifer Chandler, a freshman, saw the same pattern of torment:



HOME VIDEO:
Last year Williams
groused about
school in a video he
shot of himself



GOOD TIMES Williams, in light-colored sweatshirt, with friends from his previous school in Maryland two years ago. He often said he wanted to move back there. After the shooting, his old crowd was especially stunned

DANIELLE DORSEY—GAMMA (2)

"Kids were mean to him. He'd slack it off. Like he kept it all inside."

Things weren't great at home either. Williams' parents had divorced when he was 5, and he rarely saw his mother after that. Several friends said he would automatically call their mothers Mom. Williams lived with his father Charles Jeffrey in a dank stucco apartment house about one mile from the high school. Adrianna Aceven, a fellow freshman and one of the few friends whom Williams invited back to his apartment, said the father was distant, disappearing to work on his computer when the kids walked in. On weekends the senior Williams is said to have stretched out on the floor, sipping beer and watching the sports channels. "I never saw Andy go anywhere with his dad," says Shaun Turk, 15. "Andy would call him and say it's raining and beg him to give him a ride home. But you could hear his dad yelling into the phone, 'Get your ass home!'"

So Williams sought out another place to belong. He ended up with a band of dope-smoking skateboarders who hang around Woodglen Vista Park, a short walk from the school. "When I first met Andy he was, like, a good Christian boy from Maryland," says Aceven. "But he started hanging with a different crowd, getting into trouble, ditching school, acting different." Aceven called Andy's new friends the Grommits, a term that eludes meaning even for her. The kids would sit at the tables behind the park toilets, smoking marijuana and drinking tequila they would shoplift from the Albertson's supermarket opposite the school. One of the tables has a graffito of a marijuana leaf.

Williams fell into a troubled teenage world, where Columbine has become a legend, where getting stoned on super-strong weed like "bubblegum chronic" is for some a daily deed and where ditching school to rub shoulders with the Aryan Brothers gang in the skate park is an unexceptional life choice. The scene at the public housing complex next to the park, another hangout, is dissolute. Single parents fill ashtrays the size of dinner plates with cigarette butts, indifferent or oblivious to a preteen daughter sharing with a reporter her tales of hallucinogen abuse or a 15-year-old son boasting of his near-death experience from alcohol poisoning. At night drug-crazed kids run rampant around the buildings, screaming and banging on windows like demented Valkyries. The city ran out of money before Christmas to pay for security guards for the apartment blocks, and the cops are so weary of the complex that residents claim that sometimes they don't even respond to emergency calls.

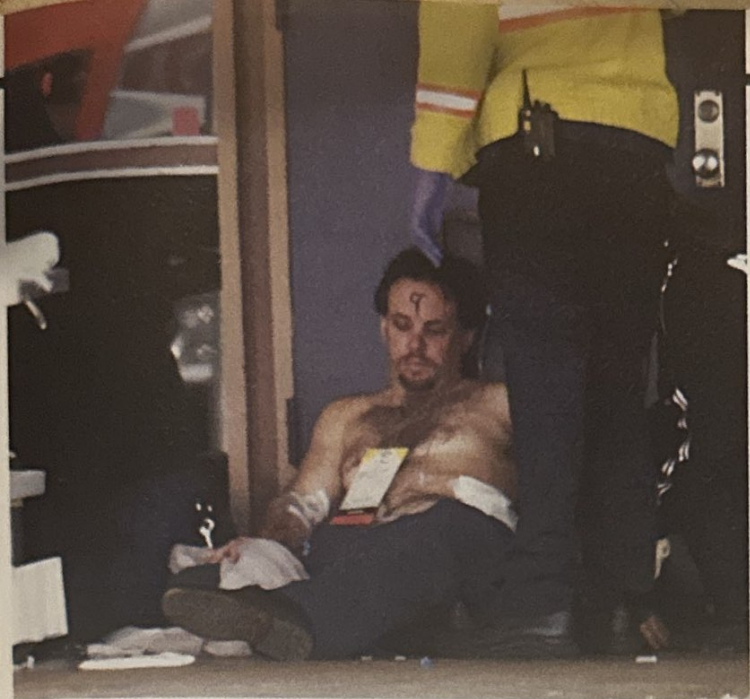
It was there that Williams met and befriended Josh Stevens, who lives there with his mother Karen and her boyfriend Chris Reynolds, 29. Williams and Stevens soon became inseparable, with Stevens always in the lead. "Andy was a follower," says Dawn Hemming, 32, a hairdresser who is the aunt of one of Williams' close friends. "Josh could manipulate Andy because Andy wanted to be In."

And he was In with that crowd, to some extent. Andy dated girls and had a week-long relationship with Ashlee Allsopp, 12, who scrawled I LOVE ANDY on her sneakers. She came to the park to see him. "We would just sit there and smoke

weed. Bong loads, pipes, joints, you name it—he smoked it."

Williams continued to be picked on, sometimes even by his newfound friends. "I made fun of him—I regret it now," says John Fields, who said he left Santana High earlier in the school year for frequent truancy and is part of the skate-park group. As recently as the Thursday before the killings, Kathleen Seek, 15, a former girlfriend of Williams' back in Maryland, received an instant message from him saying he didn't want to go to school that day for fear of being bullied. But few of Williams' friends ever really understood what was going on inside the youngster's tormented mind. "Andy didn't speak





BAD TIMES **A casualty of Williams' explosion; the shooter in court last week. In his new home in California, the diminutive Williams was bullied and taunted in school. His revenge came in a burst of bullets that killed two schoolmates**

about his problems. He kept them all in. Maybe a fuse finally blew," says Analisha Welbaum, a 14-year-old freshman.

Stevens, however, thinks he knows what finally unleashed Andy. "He was pushed to the edge," he says. "Listen to *In the End*, track eight on Linkin Park's CD. That was the song that inspired Andy." The metal hip-hop hybrid screams alienated angst: "In spite of the way you were mocking me/ Acting like I was part of your property/ Remembering all the times you fought with me/ I'm surprised it got so far..."

Williams apparently wanted the taunting to go no further. He told Stevens of his plan to take one of his father's guns from a locked cabinet inside the apartment.

"Andy took the key off the chain when his dad was sleeping," says Stevens. It's unclear whether Williams' father noticed the theft of the gun—a rare, German-made Arminius .22-cal. long-barrel revolver with an eight-shot capacity. But after the shooting, police retrieved seven other guns from the cabinet, which they said was properly locked.

For young Williams, it seems, talking about the plot to his friends was a big part of carrying it out. People at least took notice of him. Three weeks ago, Hemming heard that Williams and Stevens were planning to shoot up the school. "Two days later," she says, "I confronted Josh. I said what the hell are you and Andy planning? I said this is serious shit. He said they were just kidding. I said, 'You have to tell someone.' He said, 'I'm going to tell my mother's boyfriend [Reynolds], and he is going to have a talk with Andy.'" Hemming, who called the police after the shooting to tell this story, says she now regrets leaving the matter in the hands of Chris Reynolds. "I thought, well, he's a role model; he's a male." Thinking back on it now, she realizes, "Chris was a buddy."

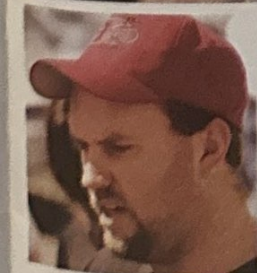
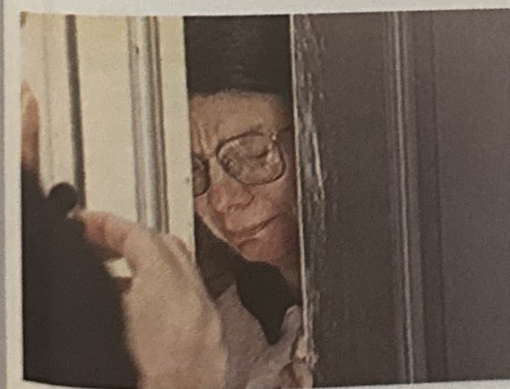
Reynolds is not a popular figure among the adults at the apartment complex. In an environment where many of the teens desperately need a father figure, Reynolds instead plays the role of older brother, horsing around with the credulous younger boys. He took Williams and Stevens paintball shooting—friends said they called themselves the Terror Squad and went downtown in San Diego to aim at drunks, though Reynolds said they only looked for paper targets. Still, he con-

cedes, "Sure, sometimes I don't always give them the best advice."

On the Saturday before the shootings, Williams, Stevens and some other friends were hanging out at Stevens' apartment. Williams had been silent earlier in the evening, as the boys sat around a small bonfire in another friend's driveway. "He was in his own little world, staring off into space," says Stevens. Later, though, he opened up about his Columbine plan. Reynolds later caught wind of the conversation: "They were in the living room all Saturday night. I heard he was going to go to school and start shooting people. I had the smallest little details. I asked him if it was true, and he said no, he was just joking around."

Stevens and Williams had also discussed stealing one of their parents' cars and driving down to the border to find a new life in Mexico. Others started goading Williams. "They talked him into it," says Stevens. "Two people said, 'Oh, yeah, just like you're running away to Mexico. You're a pussy. You won't do it.' But they were trying to get him to."

On Monday morning, Williams smoked a joint with some friends at an apartment complex on Carefree Drive. Then he hung out with Shaun Turk, John Fields and Mike Wolfe outside "the Jack"—the Jack in the Box fast-food restaurant across from the school. The only unusual thing was that Williams told them, "I got to leave when it is 9:06." Says Turk: "We usually never leave the Jack until 9:15." Analisha Welbaum saw Williams there on her way to class and said he was "really calm; he wasn't shak-



A sheriff's deputy guards Williams' apartment; his mother at the door of her home in South Carolina; Chris Reynolds, who says he regrets not taking Williams' threats seriously

SAN DIEGO UNION TRIBUNE—ZUMA PRESS; NANCEE E. LEWIS—POOL



STANDING UP FOR ANDY

The day after the shooting, friends of Williams posted a sign in his support across from the school. After a confrontation at the site, outraged students tore the placard down

ing; he wasn't stuttering." Minutes later, she was walking across the school courtyard when she heard gunshots. "I looked down the hallway and saw him—he was about 100 feet away—and he turned and looked me in the eye. Then he turned around and shot some others."

Last week police were saying little about their investigation into what Williams' friends and associates knew or did not know in advance about the shooting. They have questioned many who knew Williams, including Stevens and Reynolds. Reynolds says, "It's being reported I am the one to blame for this. I

can blame myself. But other people knew way before I did." Kristin Anton, the chief deputy district attorney in charge of the case, said two days after the shooting there were no plans to charge anyone else in the affair. But late last week, Reynolds and Stevens each hired criminal-defense lawyers. Stevens' attorney denies that his client was involved in the shootings.

In the blood-splattered bathroom at the school, Williams, to indicate there were no other shooters, told police, "It's only me." And so it was when he appeared for his first court hearing two

days after the killings. None of his family members was present. His mother was avoiding the public eye. His father told lawyers he was too distraught and did not want to face the media. He also said his "financial situation was very tight" and that he was unable to pay for a lawyer to represent his son. So Andy was alone in court, puffy-faced and solemn, represented by a public defender, saying nothing as the prosecutor read out charges that could result in 500 years of prison time.

—With reporting by

Polly Forster/Brunswick, Jeffrey Ressler and Margot Roosevelt/Santee

WILLIAMSPORT

Girlhoods Interrupted

Elizabeth Catherine Bush was no Charles Andrew Williams. She didn't shoplift booze or boast of pulling a Columbine. Bush was a quiet eighth-grader who attended Bishop Neumann High School in Williamsport, Pa., a cozy Roman Catholic school that holds spaghetti suppers and sock hops. A stickler for safety, Bush lectured the school bus driver for speeding through railroad crossings. She tacked posters of Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King Jr. to her bedroom walls and affixed pictures of the Columbine victims to the bulletin board over her desk. Her parents say she wanted to be a human-rights activist—or a nun.

Yet just minutes after emerging from a Lenten Mass Wednesday morning honoring the San Diego school-shooting victims, Bush walked into the cafeteria armed with a .22-cal. pistol, one of the 12 guns her father owned, and shot classmate Kimberly Marchese in the shoulder. Bush then placed the gun barrel against her own temple and announced that she wanted to kill herself. School staff and another student talked Bush out of pulling the trigger, and Marchese spent just one evening in the hospital. But if the outcome was far

less bloody than what had taken place two days earlier at Santana High School, the case is equally distressing for another reason: Bush, the first female school shooter in nearly three decades, belies much of the profile we have come to associate with—and use to help intercept—the potential kid killers among us.

Those who know Bush paint a complex portrait of her. She idolized pacifists like King but studied martial arts and had once practiced her shot at the firing range with her father. She made fast friends with the outcasts at school yet wanted nothing more than to be accepted by Marchese, the cheerleading captain who ran with the cool crowd. "She has a kind heart," says her mother Catherine. "In school

she made friends with a girl in a wheelchair and helped her out. She would always put herself between those who were being picked on" and their tormentors. But Bush just as readily recoiled when those taunts were turned on her and students started making fun of her appearance. Bush's parents claim the ridicule was so severe at the public junior high Bush attended before Bishop Neumann that students, on occasion, actually pelted her with stones. Bush became depressed, started skipping classes and even resorted to self-mutilation by cutting her arms.

Her parents hoped to give Bush a new start when they transferred her to the much smaller Bishop Neumann, where the student-to-teacher ratio is just 13 to 1. But the teasing there was just as bad. According to Bush's lawyer George Lepley, the trouble peaked in recent weeks when Bush at-

tempted to make peace with Marchese, who, Lepley says, was tormenting her. Bush sent Marchese e-mails and confided her troubles to her. Lepley claims that Marchese then passed those secrets along to other students. "She was betrayed," says Lepley, "and her intimate feelings were revealed for others to mock." While Marchese has acknowledged that the two girls have spoken—about matters as personal as God—her father denies his daughter harassed Bush or broke a confidence.

What made Bush snap remains even more of a mystery to her parents and friends. One, Jenn Oglesby, 14, spent almost every weekend shopping and watching videos with Bush. "She seemed really happy," says Oglesby, who spoke to Bush on the phone the night before the shooting. "We talked about school, but she didn't mention any problems." Before Bush excused herself for dinner, the two made plans to hang out over the weekend. Instead, as her friend sat in a juvenile-detention center charged with attempted homicide, Oglesby stopped by Bush's home last Friday night to console her parents and to drop off a gift she knew her friend would appreciate: earrings in the shape of two gold crosses.

—By Jodie Morse

Reported by Ed Barnes and Elaine Rivera/Williamsport



Bush, above, hung out on weekends with her friend Oglesby, far left

SCORECARD OF HATRED

MAY 13, 1999



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.

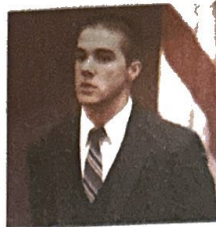
MAY 19, 1999

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



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.



AP (3)

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.

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 by 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.

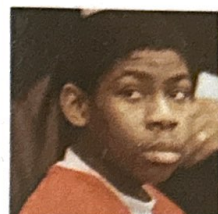
MAY 18, 2000

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



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



FOILED

CARLOS CHAVEZ—THE DESERT SUN/AP

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

THE LEGACY O

ONLY A FEW STUDENTS TRY TO COPY THEM; MOST STUDENTS DESPISE THEM. BUT **ERIC HARRIS AND DYLAN KLEBOLD** CONTINUE TO HAUNT SCHOOLS TODAY. CAN CAMPUSES BE SAFE WITHOUT BEING PARANOID?



F COLUMBINE

By JOHN CLOUD

WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER growing up in Arkansas, I stored my 12-gauge shotgun under my bed. I took it out when I went with Dad to shoot clay pigeons. That wasn't back in the 1950s but rather the late '80s; even in that recent decade, I wasn't considered an outcast. Lots of kids drove to school with rifles they had forgotten to take from gun racks over the weekend. A teacher might cluck disapprovingly, but no one called a SWAT team.

Just 15 years later, my parents and my school must seem spectacularly negligent. In the past few years, 17 states have made it a crime to leave a loaded firearm within

up websites memorializing Harris and Klebold, even warn they will "pull a Columbine." But a much larger group of teens is ever more watchful, ready to report any threat, no matter how ludicrous it sounds. It's unclear what kind of people graduate from high schools where some kids hurt so much they want to kill, while other kids fear so much they want to report harmless pranksters. But we already know that high school will never be the same.

Columbine was not the first mass killing at a school, but it was so ornately gory and so profoundly heartbreaking that it became a cultural reference point. "The anxieties and angers that used to be free floating in adolescents now simply attach to events like Columbine," says University of California at Berkeley law professor Franklin Zimring. "Instead of just talking about it, now they

she had heard two boys make comments on the bus about killing people. Sudd's father contacted the authorities, who quickly obtained a search warrant for the homes of the boys. The cops found a rifle and a list of 16 students whom the boys allegedly were going to target. Far from being ridiculed as a tattler, Sudd has been hailed as a heroine in Twentynine Palms, where fellow students hug her and the city plans to honor her.

Similarly, two boys were arrested last Wednesday after classmates at Friendship Christian School in Lebanon, Tenn., told teachers the boys had threatened them and talked of destroying Friendship. Students also turned in potential copycats last week in Miami, where two boys were suspended for 10 days after they said what happened in Santee was nothing

“DESPITE THE HIGH-TECH STRATEGIES, THE BEST METAL DETECTOR IS THE STUDENT.”

reach of a minor. And you don't have to bring a gun to school to get suspended. In the post-Columbine era, a fingernail clipper will do, or a pair of scissors, according to a Harvard report released last year on zero-tolerance policies against "weapons."

Of course, nothing could be the same after Columbine, and now Santee. As long as sad little boys can find guns, schools must be vigilant. But at what price? Today it seems as though an arms race has begun in American high schools: as a tiny number of disaffected kids stockpile guns and home-made bombs to mimic Columbine's Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold (or at least threaten to), communities are investing millions of dollars to bring armed cops—er, "resource officers"—to campus, along with metal detectors and security cameras.

Meanwhile, the culture of high schools is changing in a more subtle way. A kind of psychological arms race has broken out. Some teenagers identify with the killers and yearn for the attention they receive. These kids make lists of their enemies, set

have a model." Harris and Klebold would smile at their progeny not only in Santee but also in Lake Worth, Fla.; Fort Gibson, Okla.; and Deming, N.M. (see chart, page 30).

But in part because they have seen the survivors of school massacres weeping after the slaughter, many kids are helping to stop the shooting before it starts by sharing information about troubled peers. "The best metal detector is the student," says Ronald Stephens of the National School Safety Center. That's because in more than 75% of school-violence incidents, the attacker had told someone first, according to a post-Columbine study by the Secret Service that applied its threat-assessment techniques to school safety.

Snitches are becoming angels. Last month in Fort Collins, Colo., two girls warned police about three students who were then discovered with weapons and plans to attack Preston Junior High. Just last week in Twentynine Palms, Calif., Victoria Sudd, 17, watched the Santee horror unfold and then told her mom that

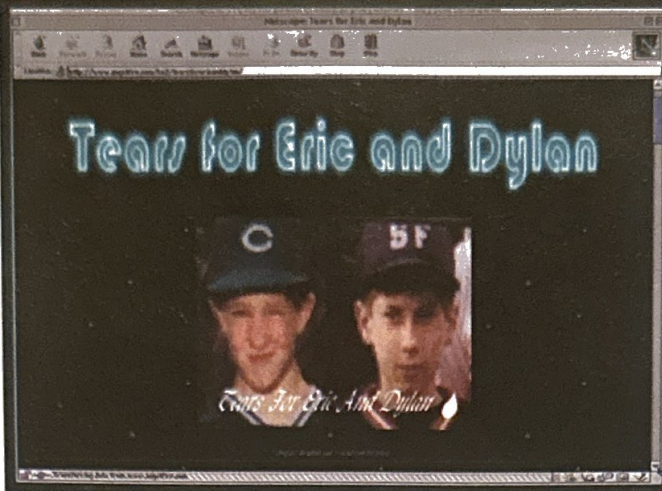
compared with what they could do there.

But if all these incidents suggest that violence at schools has reached epidemic proportions, we should take a step back. It hasn't. According to the journal *Criminal Justice Ethics*, more than 99.99% of public schools have never had a homicide of any kind, let alone a mass killing. In the 1992-93 school year, there were 54 violent deaths on campuses; last year there were 16. "The data suggest that most schools are very safe places for kids, and they're getting safer," says Thomas Connelly, a safety consultant who has worked in schools in 22 states.

Schools are cracking down nonetheless, on the theory that lightning can strike anywhere. Cops are a fixture in many schools (Houston Independent School District alone employs a stunning 177 officers), and so are keycards for entry. And all over the nation, schools have installed phone lines for anonymous tips; administrators must spend hours following up on the calls. "We push the staff almost to the breaking

point to investigate every one," says Tom Miller, a school official in Port Huron, Mich. At some schools—including Columbine, understandably—the tips lead automatically to a police investigation, even when they are benign comments taken out of context.

That was the case with the high school student represented by Micki Moran, a family-law attorney in the Chicago suburbs. In 1999, nine days after Columbine, the student, a ninth-grade boy from Wheeling, Ill., was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, though the police considered more serious charges, including mayhem. Classmates thought of him as an "unpopular nerd," Moran says, and made fun of his black clothes. One day at lunch, a group of kids approached him; one said, "You're like those kids at Columbine." The boy responded, "I could be." On the



TEEN ANGST: Some who empathize with the killers and their pain have set up websites like this one in memory of Harris and Klebold

strength of those three little words, Moran says, hysteria broke out at the school as rumors swirled about his possible intent. His locker was searched, and the baseball bat found inside was labeled a weapon. The entire school was evacuated. The boy spent six months in counseling and is now flourishing at another school. The school has said that under

the circumstances, it acted appropriately.

But the post-Columbine story is not always about overreaction. Officials at some schools, including those that have witnessed tragedies, have found ways of persuading students to communicate calmly their worries to teachers they trust. At Deming Middle School in New Mexico, where Araceli Tena was shot in the head by a classmate in 1999, principal Mike Chavez has visited every classroom to talk about

the damage of spreading baseless rumors. The Santee news didn't cause a flurry of bogus threats or panicky tips at Deming this week, as it did at so many other schools. Similarly, officials in Jefferson County, Colo., home of Columbine, say the results of two surveys—one taken last year and one just before the carnage—show that the district's

SENTENCING

Throwing the Book at Kids

We will never know what vision 12-year-old Lionel Tate had of himself when he battered a 6-year-old girl to death two years ago in South Florida, pummeling her so thoroughly that her liver split in half. Was he pretending to be a pro wrestler, the kind who merrily body-slam their opponents without really hurting them? Or was he acutely aware of the damage he was inflicting? Likewise, we may not get the satisfaction of knowing if, across the country in California, 15-year-old Andy Williams truly understood what it meant to shoot and to kill when he opened fire on his classmates in that Santee school bathroom.

What we do know is that the courts in California and Florida do not trouble themselves much with determining the motives of those usually considered to be still incapable of adult reasoning. Like most other states, both have enacted laws over the past decade to ensure that boys like Tate and Williams get tried as adults. That's why Tate was sentenced last week to life in prison without the

possibility of parole—perhaps the first time a life sentence has been imposed for a crime committed at such a young age.

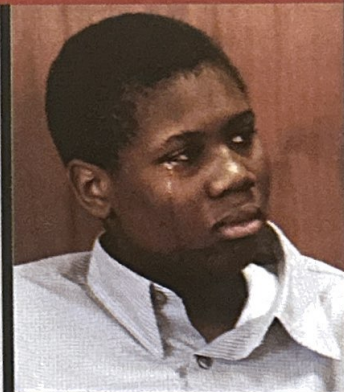
Yet something strange is happening in the aftermath of Tate's trial. The public that applauded the laws that ordained his sentence was stunned at the image of the pudgy boy crying as he was told he'd be put away for life. And people involved in the case are acting just as remorsefully: prosecutor Ken Padowitz, after doing his job so well, has vowed to ask Florida Governor Jeb Bush to commute the sentence. Bush, who has signed some of the toughest juvenile-crime legislation in the country, has promised to consider it.

That conflicted reaction, even to an admittedly extreme case, is one glimmer of what legal experts describe as a looming backlash against the tough-on-juvenile-crime bills that politicians scrambled to enact over the past 10 to 15 years. "More states are looking at the impact of what they did," says Shay Bilchik, executive director of the Child Welfare League of America. "They're hearing from

their judges, prosecutors and child advocates that we're giving up on way too many kids."

Between 1992 and 1997, all but six states made it easier to try kids as adults. Research showing higher recidivism rates among youths sent through the adult system failed to slow the trend. Even when juvenile-crime rates began to decline in the early '90s, fear of teenage "predators" lingered. States lowered the age at which kids get shifted into the adult system and broadened the definition of so-called adult crimes. They streamlined the process that held sway for much of the last century, whereby a juvenile-court judge decided each child's fate. In more than half the states, certain juvenile offenders now go to adult court without any hearings at all. Once Tate's mother rejected a plea offer and the jury reached a guilty verdict, Broward County Judge Joel Lazarus had little choice but to sentence Tate to life.

In California a referendum approved by 62% of voters last year requires that juveniles as young as 14 be tried as adults in murder cases. Prop. 21 will probably seal Williams' fate. One part of the new law was blocked in February, when an appeals court ruled that prosecutors had



LIFER: Tate, 14, after being sentenced for a 1999 murder

been granted too much power to send kids to adult court. But even if the state supreme court upholds the law, some lawyers from both sides of the aisle hope a compromise will be found somewhere between no judicial discretion and too much. Says attorney William La Fond, who challenged Prop. 21 in court: "In the old scheme, the defendant would get out when he was 25 years old. Prop. 21 says, 'Throw him in prison forever, no questions asked.' We need to ask if there's a middle ground." Determining whether a child is young enough to redeem himself may not be a numerical equation.

—By Amanda Ripley. With reporting by David S. Jackson/Los Angeles

“We push the staff almost to the breaking point to investigate every one.”

In Hoyt, Kans., where three students were arrested last month after they allegedly planned to bomb Royal Valley High School, student-council president Tara Goodman, 18, says the barriers that once divided students from teachers have vanished. In Oxnard, Calif., where cops killed a Hueneme High School student who was holding a classmate hostage in January, principals throughout the district now have two-way radios to be used if the phone lines go dead. Those will come in handy during any kind of disaster.

Anything seems possible after Columbine, but should it? Students at our high schools may be the best authority on this question, and they are a lot less worried than their parents about getting shot. Although 70% of adults in an April 2000 poll said they believe a shooting was likely in their neighborhood's school, in a fall 1999 poll a similar percentage of students said they feel personally safe from campus violence. Says Joanne McDaniel, director of the Center for the Prevention of School Violence: “We still have a lot of people saying it could not happen here, but we have a lot more who are realizing they need to be vigilant.” The question is, Can administrators and students be vigilant without being vigilantes? —*Reported by Wendy Cole and David Thigpen/Chicago, Nancy Harbert/Albuquerque, Rita Healy/Denver, David S. Jackson/Twenty-nine Palms, Jeanne McDowell/Los Angeles, Tim Roche/Atlanta and Rebecca Winters/New York*

students did not feel less safe a year after the killings. Which is sad in a way: you don't fear what you know intimately. It's the rest of us who are hysterical.

To be sure, some good has come as a result of the soul searching.

THE “CHARISMATIC ADULT”

What Makes a Child Resilient?

David Oriani, today a sophomore at the University of Rhode Island, was a 13-year-old public school seventh-grader when the bullying began. “At first, I tried to brush it off,” he remembers. “But it got worse. I got beat up every day and couldn't take it. I'd fake being sick. My grades slipped.” David's parents, having learned of his travails, went to school administrators. But the harassment was ceaseless, and David's thoughts darkened: “I felt, ‘What did I do to deserve this?’ I wanted revenge. I never sat down and planned anything—I personally couldn't pick up a gun and kill someone, it's not who I am—but I will tell you, I did want to hurt them. I wanted them to feel how bad I felt.”

David, with the help of his parents and a sympathetic principal at the private school to which he transferred, sur-

Brooks, a clinical psychologist on the faculty of Harvard Medical School. “A resilient child has some sense of mastery of his own life, and if he gets frustrated by a mistake, he still feels he can learn from the mistake.”

Crusaders for resiliency—and Brooks, co-author of the new book *Raising Resilient Children*, freely admits he's on a crusade—generally agree on the necessity of a linchpin relationship between the child and at least one parental figure. One of the pillars of the movement, the late Julius Segal, a pioneering psychologist in resiliency research, spoke of a “charismatic adult,” a person with whom children “could identify and from whom they gather strength.” While the obvious candidate for the role would be a mother or father, Segal noted that in a “surprising number of cases that person turns out to be a teacher.” Brooks points out that many of the violent kids in today's headlines glaringly lack such a mentor, either at home or in class. “A common thing among the school shooters is a feeling of isolation,” he says. “The more you're isolated, the more impossible life is.”

Andy Williams, the shooter last week in Santee, Calif., “was desolate,” says Sybil Wolin, a psychologist who runs a website called Project Resilience. “He tried to reach out even to other kids' parents. The effort failed, and his resiliency failed.”

Wolin, Brooks and others emphasize that to build resilience in a child does not require the molding of a superkid. What's needed is to find one or two things—what Brooks calls “islands of competence”—at which the child can succeed and thus derive a measure of self-confidence. Barry Plummer, a clinical psychologist on the faculty of Brown University's medical school who, in private practice, works with adolescents, says that grownups should “encourage a kid to master something even if he stinks at school—a sport, music, someplace he can go where he is of value. This can build a pocket of resilience.”

Fine. But how? Kids aren't talking to parents; parents are overtaxed if not absent; teachers are depleted by teaching, never mind mentoring. How? “It is a problem,” says Wolin. “So far, resiliency has been good at describing a situation but hasn't been very prescriptive.”

Asked what he would tell kids in the same situation that he faced, Oriani replied, “Reach out.” He was luckier than a lot of kids to find someone he could grasp.

—By Robert Sullivan



vived—and slowly rebuilt his self-esteem.

In an age when bullying has had fatal consequences, his tale, while painful, is ultimately a success story. In fact, Oriani could stand as a poster boy for a modern movement that seeks to understand resilience among the young: what it is that allows some kids to negotiate the tunnel to a brighter day, while others get lost or even crash.

Psychological resiliency, a concept first popularized in the early 1970s, focuses on the positive. Its evangelists don't dwell on kids who fail under stress but on those who, against long odds, succeed. “The hallmarks of a resilient child include knowing how to solve problems or knowing that there's an adult to turn to for help,” says Robert

Chat with John Cloud about school violence on AOL at 7 p.m. E.T. on March 14. **Keyword: Live.**