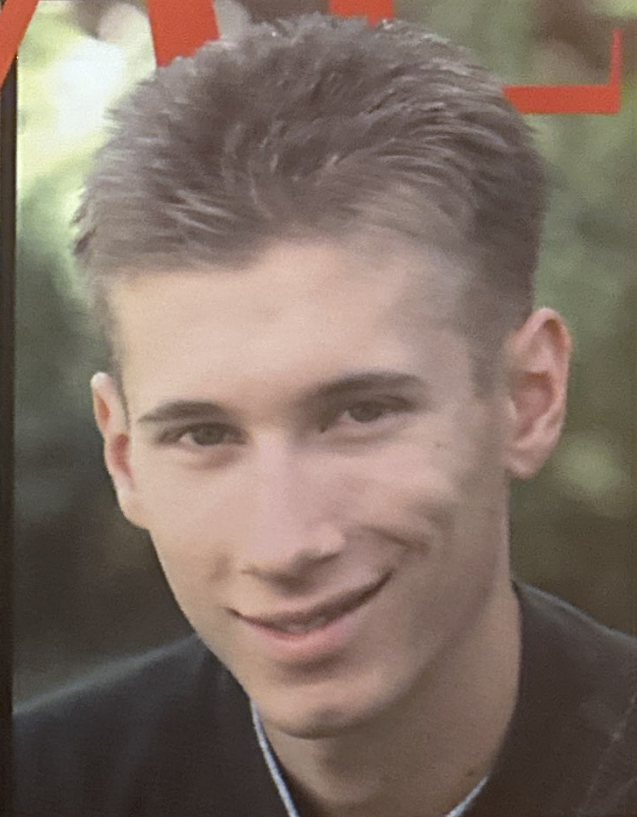
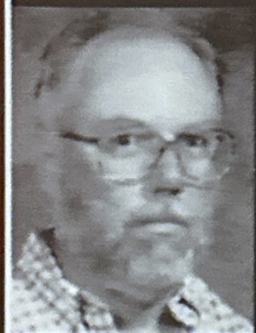
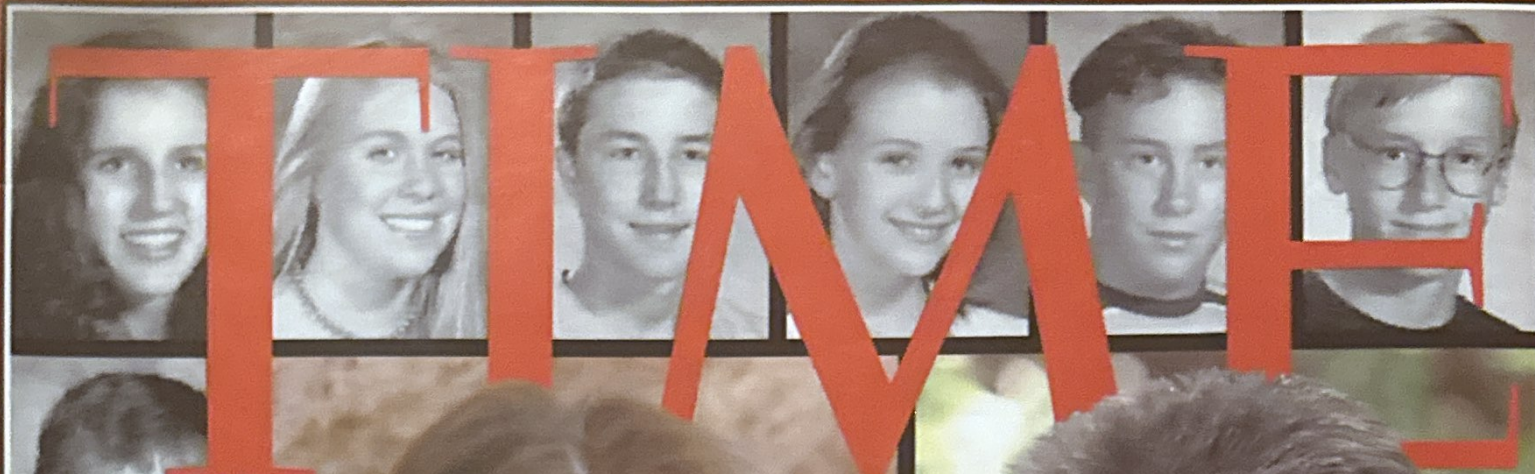
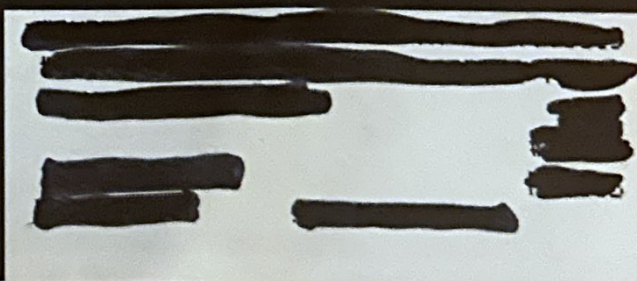




THE MONSTERS NEXT DOOR

A SPECIAL REPORT ON THE COLORADO SCHOOL MASSACRE



On March 4, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold sat for this class picture. On April 17, they both went to the prom. What they did next left their school ...

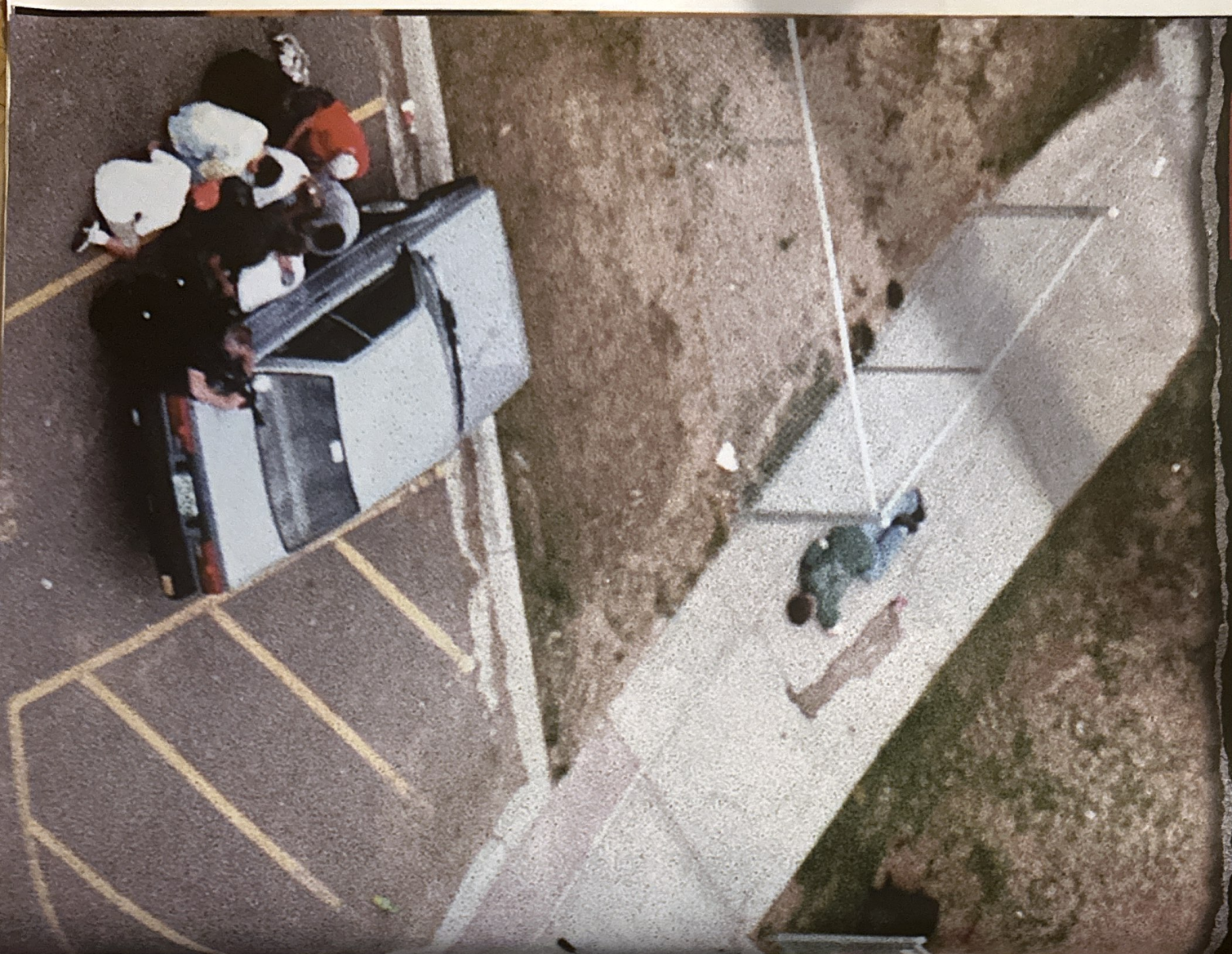


THE BOYS IN BLACK: Harris and Klebold, at the top left corner, pose for their class photo in Columbine's gym. In front of Harris is Brooks Brown, whom they told to leave school on the day they began shooting

... IN SORROW AND DISBELIEF



ANGLISH: A student in distress at the triage area across from Columbine High



CYRUS MCCORMACK—ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS/SPSMA

HIGH SCHOOL IS A HAUNTED HOUSE IN April, when seniors act up because the end is near. Even those who hate school sometimes cling to the devil they know. And for the kids who love it, the goodbyes are hard to think about. Two weeks ago, Sara Martin was chosen to be a graduation speaker for Columbine High, and she was struggling. She wanted to write about all the people she loved, in the choir and the Bible club and even the ones who hum left out of the right-hand lane in the parking lot.

"I have loved oysters at 7 in the morning in the teachers' lounge with Mme. Lutz and the halls that smelled like rotting Easter eggs," she wrote. "I have loved fire drills and Tai Chi on the lawn with Mr. Kritzer's philosophy class. I have loved you and our moments of folly together ... We're all looking for passion, for something, anything, in our lives." And she wondered how to capture the spirit, "the humanity and integrity that walk the halls of our very own Columbine."

She was in the choir room last Tuesday when something very different was walking the halls. By the end of that gruesome day, by the time 15 people had died, her friends among them, she had her yearbook of humanity and integrity signed in blood. As Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris prowled the school with their guns and bombs, this is what the children did: a boy draped himself over his sister and her friend, so that he would be the one shot. A boy with 10 bullet wounds in his leg picked up an explosive that landed by him and hurled it away from the other wounded kids. Others didn't want to leave their dying teacher when the SWAT team finally came: Can't we carry him out on a folded-up table? A girl was asked by the gunman if she believed in God, knowing full well the safe answer, "There is a God," she said quietly, "and you need to follow along God's path." The shooter looked down at her. "There is no God," he said, and he shot her in the head.

Before we inventory the evil we cannot fathom, consider the reflexes at work among these happy, lucky kids, born to a generation that is thought to know nothing about sacrifice. They had no way of knowing what would be asked of them, what they were capable of. Among the kids who died and the ones who were prepared to die were the students who stayed behind to open a door, or save a friend, or build an escape route or barricade a closet or guide the descending SWAT teams into the darkness.

The story of the slaughter at Columbine High School opened a sad national conversation about what turned two boys' souls into poison. It promises to be a long, hard talk, in public and in private, about why smart, privileged kids rot inside. Do we



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI—AP. FAR LEFT: MORGAN GONZALEZ; MIDDLE: ROBERT MOUNTAIN NEWS/SPSMA

UPHEAVAL Students and police take cover as a body lies on the sidewalk between the school and a parking lot, far left; rescue personnel wheel the wounded away, top; one of the many small groups escaping from the assault on Columbine, left

Over time, Eric became more angry at the world and had an effect on Dylan.

—NICK ZUPANCIC, A SENIOR



blame the parents, blame the savage music they listened to, blame the ease of stockpiling an arsenal, blame the chemistry of cruelty and cliques that has always been a part of high school life but has never been so deadly? Among the many things that did not survive the week was the hymn all parents unconsciously sing as they send their children out in the morning, past the headlines, to their schools. It can't happen here, Lord, no, it could never happen here.

Sure it can. It can even happen in Littleton, a town of 35,000 near the dusty-tan foothills of the Rockies, just southwest of Denver. It was once a small prairie town of gold rushers and traders, where the biggest scare was getting hit by a prairie dog. Now it's a stretched finger of the big city, with aspiring families who don't lock their doors, enclaves with names like Coventry and Raccoon Creek and Bel Flower, scrubland turned into golf courses, houses that run anywhere from \$75,000 to \$5 million or so. There's an arch over a hallway in the high school engraved with a motto: "The finest kids in America pass through these halls."

THE DAY BEGAN WITH AN OMEN. ON THE classroom video monitors, the "phrase of the day" was not exactly Ralph Waldo Emerson. Instead, noticed a student, it was something to the effect, "You don't want to be here." Below that was the date, not spelled out April 20, as was the custom, but written 4/20 in bold type, a pulsing message easily decoded. "It's weed-smoking day," one student said, referring to the shorthand for going out and getting stoned; marijuana is supposed to contain 420 different chemicals; the Los Angeles police department's code for a drug bust is 420.

And it was also, as we now know too well, Adolf Hitler's birthday. In the handwritten diary of one of the suspects, the anniversary, say the police, was clearly marked as a time to "rock and roll." Some members of Harris and Klebold's clique, tagged in derision a few years before as the Trench Coat Mafia, had embraced enough Nazi mythology to speak their classmates. They reportedly wore swastika

kas on black shirts, spoke German in the halls, re-enacted World War II battles, played the most vicious video games, talked about whom they hated, whom they would like to kill. Harris and Klebold liked to bowl; when Harris made a good shot, he would throw his arm up, "Hell Hitler!"

But they were not really dangerous, right? Every school has its rebels, its Goths in black nail polish and lipstick, its stoners and deadbeats, sometimes, as in this case, the very brightest techie kids who found solidarity in exclusion. "We hung out. We listened to music," says Alejandra Marsh, 16. "We went over to someone's house and watched cartoons. We loved *Pinky* and *The Brain* and *Animaniacs*." Fellow students described them as discarded, unwanted "stereotypical geeks," who, like the jocks and preppies, had their own table in the cafeteria, their group picture in the yearbook with the caption, "Who says we're different? Insanity's healthy. Stay alive, stay different, stay crazy."

"They do it for the attention," says Greg Montgomery, 19. "It's kind of like a rivalry with us," pipes in hockey player Chip Dunleavy, 17. "They hate us because we're like the social elite of the school."

THAT RIVALRY HAD BEEN SMOLDERING for months. Some students say even the teachers picked on the Trench Coats, blaming them for things they hadn't done and letting the jocks get away with anything because they were the crown princes. One athlete in particular liked to taunt them. "Dunbug," he'd say, or maybe, "Nice dress." Others called them "faggots," inbreeds, harassing them to the point of throwing rocks and bottles at them from moving cars. "You have to understand that there were as many lies, rumors and intrigue as in Washington this past year," says Marsh. "It's almost the definition of a teenager to be cruel to those who are not like you. They don't like to admit it," she says, but "the ones who are the worst at spreading rumors and lies would be the jocks and the cheerleaders. There was



THE HARRIS RESIDENCE. THE HARRISES BOUGHT their four-bedroom home in May 1996. On the day before the shooting, neighbor Tony Fazio, 10, heard the sound of glass breaking and a buzzing sound coming out of the Harris garage. Eric, he says, "was always in there with the door closed"

THE KLEBOLD HOME IS tucked just under a stunning outcropping of red rocks. When he was about 10, Dylan told a friend, he fell asleep on the rocks only to awake in the dark to the sound of coyotes howling. Too scared to run back into the house, he stayed out till daybreak



COURTESY BRIAN MARSH—KCNL-TV



"You got the feeling he had low self-esteem. He was a bit reclusive but nice."

—SARA MARTIN, A CLASSMATE

THE ATTACK

BEFORE 11:25 A.M. TUESDAY APRIL 20

- 1 Armed with a semiautomatic rifle, two sawed-off shotguns, a semi-automatic handgun and dozens of homemade bombs, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold approach the school through the parking lot and shoot a female student. While other students in the area take cover, the pair shoot a male student in the back and set off bombs in the parking lot and on the school's roof.
- 2 They enter the school, go to the cafeteria and open fire, shooting and throwing pipe bombs. Students and adults in the cafeteria and throughout the building hit the floor, hide in classrooms, bathrooms and closets.
- 3 Harris and Klebold exit the cafeteria and head up the stairs. They exchange gunfire with school police officer Neil Gardner. Some students flee the school.
- 4 The gunmen shoot a teacher, Dave Sanders, who is trying to direct students to safety.
- 5 They enter the library and demand that all locks stand up. Three female students and seven male students are killed. The gunmen kill themselves.

THE RESPONSE

- 11:21 A.M. Sheriff's office receives a report of an explosion near the school.
- 11:26 Calls are made to 911 from the school.
- 11:40 A team of police officers arrive.
- 12 NOON Ambulances take the first of the wounded students to hospitals.
- 12:30 P.M. SWAT teams begin a sweep of the building looking for bombs.
- 3:30 Police find the 12 bodies, including the two gunmen in the library.
- 4:30 Building declared under control.
- 6:15 Explosive devices are found in a car in the parking lot.
- WEDNESDAY 10:30 P.M. All victims have been identified and removed from the scene.
- THURSDAY A bomb made of a 20-lb. propane tank, wrapped with shrapnel, a gasoline can and wires is found inside a duffel bag in the cafeteria kitchen.



COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL



one rumor we went around killing small animals. Another rumor that we had orgies."

Some of the French Coats tried to ignore the hazing, but some started back, and one reportedly flashed a shotgun at his abusers in the park. They made a video for class, a tale of kids in trench coats hunting down their enemies with shotguns. The graffiti in the boys' bathroom warned: COLUMBINE WILL EXPLODE ONE DAY. KILL ALL ATHLETES. ALL JOCKS MUST DIE.

It was all out in the open, all the needles and threats, but in a school of nearly 2,000 busy, ambitious kids, that quiet hissing sound was just background noise, drowned out by the gossip about who went to the prom with whom on Saturday night, the humming of the seniors' theme song, *The Way You Look Tonight*, and finally the normal sounds of a Tuesday morning, when the biology class was worrying about its test on the digestive system, the choir was rehearsing for its afternoon concert and it was warm enough outside to wear shorts, at last.

It was Free Cookie Day in the cafeteria, and there were hundreds of students draped around the tables and waiting in lines at the 11:30 lunch hour when the sounds of the firing erupted outside. Students saw two boys in trench coats and masks firing at kids, one tossed something up onto the roof of the school, and it exploded in a flash. Some kids thought it was the long-awaited senior prank: they had been expecting balloons filled with shaving cream. Surely those are firecrackers, they thought. Surely those guns are fake. Is the blood fake? Can a fake bomb make walls shake? Then they were screaming and running. One boy could feel the rush of a bullet past his head.

"Get down!" the junior yelled. "Get under a table!" They dove for cover, then began crawling—under furniture, over backpacks, slithering toward the stairs. Then they ran as the shots came again. "We heard boom after boom," says sophomore Jody Clouse. "The floor was shaking from the explosions." Bullets clanged as they bounced off metal lockers. Some tried to run upstairs, to the safety of the library. But there was smoke everywhere, the fire alarms had gone off, and the sprinkler system was turning the school into a blinding, misty jungle. So they retreated back downstairs, away from the library, which, by the time the mayhem ended, had turned into a tomb.

Cafeteria worker Karen Nielsen had

rushed to help the bleeding students when she spotted the shooters. As she heard the shots blowing through the room, she shoved the kids into a bathroom. She pulled a phone along with her to call the police. But then she worried. "They'll see the cord. And then we'll be trapped."

Sheriff's deputy Neil Gardner, posted at the school for security, heard the shots and ran toward the cafeteria. When he spotted one gunman, he exchanged fire, then ducked for cover and called for backup. By this time the 911 calls were already coming in, and the SWAT cars were on the scene within 20 minutes. But the bombs were still going off, and the officers had no idea how many shooters there were—or which ones



FOOLING AROUND: Harris, in cap, and Klebold, to his left, mingling during their 1999 senior-class photo session

were killers and which were targets. "They didn't want to go in there with guns blazing," says Cathy Scott, mother of two students who escaped, "and kill the wrong kids." And so the police hunkered down, as the bombs kept exploding all around.

UPSTAIRS IN THE SCIENCE WING, SCIENCE teacher Dick Will thought, "There go those chemistry people blowing things up again." But when the fire alarm rang, Will knew it was more than students at work. A group of his kids went down the hall to investigate, and came back yelling and screaming. "They're shooting!" He herded his charges back to the corner of the room, shut off the lights and started turning over chairs and desks and piling them up against the doors.

Other teachers had the same instincts. Business teacher Dave Sanders was in the faculty lounge when he heard the trouble, raced toward the cafeteria and went to war. "He screamed for us to get down and shut up," says freshman Kathy Carlson. "We crawled on the floor and made it to the stairs." When the firing began again, they got up and started to run. Sanders, on the ground, propped himself on his elbows, directing kids to safety as the killers moved

**Their lives
were cut**

short. Here's
a snapshot
of where
they were
headed



CASSIE BERNALL,
17, dabbled in
witchcraft before
she was born
again. One of the
gunmen asked,
"Do you believe in
God?" She said
she did. He pulled
the trigger



STEVEN ROBERT CURNOW, 14, hoped to become Navy pilot. He was a big *Star Wars* fan and an avid soccer player; his father had recently taught him to referee.



COREY DEPOTER, 17, was into wrestling, golf and hunting, but he liked fishing best. This spring the junior drove to Oklahoma with his best friend for a fishing expedition



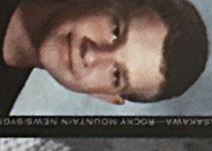
KELLY FLEMING, 16, moved to Littleton from Phoenix, Ariz., a year and a half ago. She was creative—writing poetry, composing songs and learning to play the guitar



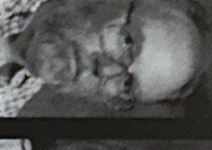
MATTHEW KECHTER, 16, was trying to make the starting squad as a lineman on the varsity football team. Still, the sophomore had time to maintain a straight-A average



DANIEL MAUSER
15. I liked a challenge. He excelled at the sciences but took on cross-country (to push himself) and debate (to overcome his shyness)



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LIAM DAVID
NDERS, 47, a
business teacher,
is hit as he
spherded
students to safety.
the father of
lay dying, he
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ve them"



SCHL SCOTT, planned to come a missionary in Africa and started a recent school y. She had a ally spirit that n her many ds



MANAH SHOELS, survived a congenital heart defect and earned spot on the football team. The players appeared to seek him out largely because of his race.



JOHN TOMLIN, 16, had an easy smile and a soft spot for the beat-up Chevy he paid for himself. Last year he traveled with his dad to Mexico to build a house for the poor



AUREN
TOWNSEND, 18,
had a 4.0 grade
average, making
her a strong
contender for
aledictorian. She
also captained the
girls' volleyball
team.



KYLE VELASQUEZ, 16, had been a slow learner and was very shy. But after mentoring him for a year, Kent Kochsmeyer says, "He opened up more, and we became friends."

ON THE CLASSROOM TV, THE battered students could see the SWAT teams assembling, the news choppers hovering, and eventually the parents beginning to gather, as they and the rest of the country watched the scene take hold of the school. "The police didn't know where the shooters were, or where the bombs were," says Laxis, "so they couldn't get us right away." Her friends began writing notes to

down onto a table in the teachers' lounge. Somehow uninjured, he picked himself up and sprinted out a door to freedom as the shooting continued behind him. "They were shooting everywhere; it seemed like they wanted to kill everything in sight," he says. "I've never been so frightened in my life. I was run for your life or die."

His twin brother Adam, meanwhile, was in trouble down the hall. He had been in choir practice, preparing for a concert that afternoon at an elementary school. When the shooting started, Adam and about 60 others crammed into the choir room office as the explosions seemed to come closer and closer. They pushed a file cabinet in the hot, stagnant air, sealing the door. In the hall, stagnant air, several kids began to gag and cough. *Shhh*, quiet, the others said, fearing any sound would

climbed up and pulled out some ceiling tiles, then lifted the students up to where the air was fresher. The quiet was cut when the office phone rang. It was the elementary school calling. Wondering why the concert was being delayed.

MANY OF THE KIDS WHO MADE IT OUT THERE exits ran into the parking lots. Police had heard rumors that the gunmen were exchanging clothes with the students, so everyone had to be checked, patted down, in order for the cops to be sure these weren't the victims escaping and not the killers. Neighbors arrived with blankets, bandages and gauze and brought kids into their homes. A nurse passing through the area found herself doing triage on a front lawn. The ambulances began shutting their doors— the ones who had been able to

though his son might be involved and offering to help negotiate a surrender. The SWAT team leaders decided they didn't think he could be of any use.

All the while the killers were still inside, going about their business. And in the end, they did their deadliest work in the school's quiet place, the best place to find people in a school when finals are looming and everyone worries about getting term papers done on time.

A teacher, identified by police only as Peggy, made it into the library a few steps ahead of the killers. First she called the police. Then, over the phone, she could be overheard desperately trying to warn the kids. "There's a guy with a gun!" she yelled, bleeding. "Kids, under the table! Kids, stay on the floor! Oh, God. Oh, God—kids, just stay down!" At first, Craig Scott

The killers went round the room, asking around us." "And you?"

The killers went round the room, asking people why they should let them live. Students heard one girl pleading for her life, then a shot, and quiet. They told wounded kids to quit crying, it will all be over soon, you'll all be dead. They approached another girl, cowering under a table, yelled "Peekaboo!" and shot her in the neck. Again, one who cried or moaned was shot again.

The murderers were utterly without pity. Survivors said they treated it like a video game. "We've wanted to do this a long time," they said. At one point one of the gunmen recognized a student and said, "Oh, I know you—you can go." And then, "We're out of ammo ... gotta reload. We'll come back to get you three."

Craig took off his white baseball hat

over the desk, knocking out his teeth.

A teacher got the paramedics on the phone, and the classroom turned into a trauma ward. Aaron Hancey, a junior, had had some first-aid training, and the paramedics tried to take the kids through the basic lifesaving treatment. Boys stripped off their shirts to make pillows for Sanders' head and bandages for the bloody holes in his torso. They found some emergency blankets stashed with the fire gear in that room and wrapped him up as his temperature started to fall. They could tell they were losing him. "I can't breathe," he murmured. "I've got to go." But they kept talking to him, pulled his wallet out of his pocket and held up the pictures of his daughters. Tell us about them, they said. "He was breathing and awake the whole time," says Jody Clouse. "I'm sure the pain was great." They made a sign with the dry-erase board and

theaters, saying that they loved them that they thought they were going to die. Everyone was praying. "In a world where there are so many religions," says Lexisus "everyone was praying the same way." One friend made a vow, "If I ever get out, I'm going to be nice to my little brother."

Elsewhere up and down the halls, students locked themselves in closets and classrooms, also calling out on their cell phones. They called police; they called parents; they called for anyone who could come and help get them out. Some could hear sounds of laughing in the hallways, as the shooters prowled through the smoke. They heard the jeering, "Oh, you f---ing nerds! Tonight's a good night to die." Senior Nick Foss and a friend ducked into a bathroom punched through a ceiling panel and shimmed along the ventilation shaft. Suddenly, one of the vents broke, and Foss fell 15 ft

ture the killers, who for all they knew were right outside. The choir room lay near the top of the stairs, close to where the carnage began, and very close to the library where it would finally end.

Someone in the choir room whispered, "Who's religious? Anybody in here religious?" The huddled students started to pray, very, very quietly. "I was terrified of the outside," says Craig Nason, a junior. "But on the inside, God gave me peace. It felt like many others outside the school were praying for us." The walls of the office kept shuddering with each shot and explosion, for an agonizing 20 minutes or so. The things fell quiet, and they waited. When they reached the police by phone, pleading for rescue, they were told that the police had to move slowly because of the possibility of booby traps. Some students with asthma started having trouble breathing. Others

g, out of the building on their own power—to area hospitals. Senior SWAT team agent Donn Kraemer spotted a boy in a window, limp, bleeding, desperate to get out. “He looked at us but was oblivious,” Kraemer said. “He was going to come out headfirst.” Kraemer and another agent grabbed him and pulled him to safety. The boy, with gunshot wounds in the head and foot, was so much in shock that he could barely say his name. Rick or Rich, they thought he said. His name was Patrick Ireland. He had taken two bullets to the head. Last week the 17-year-old was in serious condition, suffering from impaired speech and damaged motor skills to his right side.

Among the countless offers of help that came in during the siege was one the police did not accept. Well before any potential suspects had been named publicly, Kiebold's father contacted police, saying he

HE WAS LAUGHING, EXCITED. "Who's next?" they said. "Who's ready to die?" The two moved through the room, calling out: "All the jocks stand up. We're going to kill every one of you." Seth Houly had come to the library to hang out with his sister and a friend; they ducked under a table and he lay on top of them so he would be the one to be hit. "Honestly, I think that God made us invisible," he told the Denver Post. "We prayed the hardest we'd ever

and hid it. When the killers walked by, they saw Isaiah and called him a "nigger." He pleaded with them not to shoot, just let him go home, he wanted his mom, and they pulled the trigger. Then they shot Matt Craig, covered in his friends' blood, lay very, very still. As he told Katie Couric two mornings later, in an account almost unbearable to watch, Craig began praying for courage. "God told me to get out of there," he said. So he got up and started to run, yelling to others to come with him. One girl pleaded for help. "She had a chunk of her shoulder blown off with a shotgun," Craig said. "And I helped her get out. She was bleeding all over the place, and her—her bone was showing." They got out of the library, out to an exit, down to the cops, where Craig told them what the shooters looked like, where they were.

And then he asked the other kids if they

SPECIAL REPORT THE LITTLETON MASSACRE



PHOTO BY GONZALEZ—ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS/STOMA

had any brothers or sisters in the school, and they started praying for them. As the minutes passed, "All these people that I was praying for, 30 minutes later, their brothers and sisters were showing up." And he said to the others, "See, I told you, I told you prayer worked. I told you your sister was going to come out of this, I said—and they thanked me. And they kept praying for my sister." But something told him that all was not right for Rachel. Only the next morning did he learn, officially, that she had died. But he already knew.

Meanwhile, in the science room, Mr. Sanders was dying. Students kept giving the police specific directions to the room, but there was so much confusion, and the time just kept passing. Via phone, Sanders was told it would be another 10 to 15 minutes before help would arrive. "It's too long," he responded. "Tell my girls that I love them ... my wife ..."

In all it was 3½ hours before the second-floor class was rescued. Students asked if they could please help carry Sanders out on a table. No, said the SWAT team, and they

herded the students through the halls, now filled with 6 in. of water from the sprinklers, past the bodies and the blood sprayed everywhere. In the cafeteria the half-eaten lunches lay soaking on the tables. "Everything was left in place," says Lexis, "like it was a normal day." She recalls the police yelling, "If any of you take your hands away from your head, we're going to pull you away immediately. Get up and put your hands on your head. Run! RUN!"

It was too late for Sanders. Gradually his breathing weakened, his face turned blue and pale. He died just minutes after paramedics reached him. "The wait for help was so long," says Jody Clouse. "Everything that happened just didn't seem real."

ALL THE WHILE, THE TERRIFIED PARENTS were watching it unfold in real time. They streamed toward the campus as the news spread, some abandoning their cars as they came. They approached anyone who looked official, begging for news of their children. Why were the police waiting so long? Their kids were in there, some were

RELIQUARY Friends and classmates gather in the parking lot around Rachel Scott's car, which has become a shrine

running out in gushes, but so many were still missing. Where are they? Who is helping them? In time the parents were told that everyone would be reunited at nearby Leewood Elementary School, and so the vigil moved there. The parents waited as the yellow buses pulled in one at a time, dispensing 40 or so kids into joyful reunions with family and friends, like some kind of awful lottery.

There were so many lists circulating like the dreaded lists of the war dead, except these were survivor lists, and parents were desperate to see, hear anything, called out names, searched for their kids' friends to find out if they knew anything. They called homes, called hospitals, called anywhere they could think. Some of the kids who fled the school early on had gone into hiding at their friends' houses, in such shock that it was hours before they made contact with their parents.

"I'm so very happy," said Cathy Scott.

SPECIAL REPORT THE LITTLETON MASSACRE



AFTERMATH Investigators mark evidence near the doorway through which Harris and Klebold entered the school on their rampage

mother of two, "and so very sad. My kids aren't going back to school anytime soon."

Bruce Beck searched each face coming out, looking for his stepdaughter Lauren Townsend. "You see all the kids run out of the building," he told the *Rocky Mountain News*. "You're just sure one of the kids is going to be yours." Lauren's mother waited by the phone, waiting for word. And it didn't come. As the afternoon turned to evening, the crowd finally became smaller and more desperate. At one point there were far more pastors and counselors than parents left. Over a basketball hoop was a pink sign—PRAYER CORNER: PLEASE JOIN US. Though by this time the police had secured the high school, officials from the sheriff's office explained that there were bombs stashed among the bodies and it was too dangerous to go in and move them. And then they asked parents to come back in the morning—with dental records. Two mothers fled the building and threw up outside.

It took hours to catalog the carnage. "There were SWAT team people who were in Vietnam," said district attorney Dave Thomas, "who were crying and weeping over what they saw." But only on Thursday

did officials truly appreciate the level of mayhem the killers had in mind. In the school kitchen, in a duffel bag, they found the sinister parcel containing a propane tank, gasoline can and nails and BBs and glass that would have taken dozens of lives in the busy cafeteria. The killers, Sheriff John Stone said, "were going to destroy the school."

Before they fired their last two shots into their own heads, the killers fired off

an estimated 900 rounds, using two sawed-off shotguns, a 9-mm semiautomatic carbine and a TEC-DC 9 semiautomatic handgun. And as the smoke cleared, police discovered more than 30 bombs in all: several pipe bombs in the school and others outside in cars in the parking lot, an arsenal so large that suspicions immediately arose about whether Harris and Klebold could possibly have acted alone.

THE HARDEST THING ABOUT THE search for an explanation was the growing fear there might not be one. There would be lots of talk about the venomous culture that these boys soaked in—but many kids drink those waters without turning into mass murderers. There would be talk of deep family dysfunction, something in their past or their present, but nothing in the first days of archaeology turned up anything tidy that explained something so massively wrong. These were parents who came to all the Little League and soccer games. They even came to practices.

Dylan Klebold was said to be the weaker spirit of the two: quiet, reserved, looking for a leader, which he found in Eric Harris when the Harrises moved to Littleton from Plattsburgh, N.Y. Klebold's father Thomas is a former geophysicist who launched a mortgage-management business from his home. His mother Susan worked with blind and disabled kids at the local community college. They

lived in a modern wood-and-glass home tucked under a stunning outcropping of red rocks in an area called Deer Creek Canyon. On the day before the shooting, neighbors of the Harrises saw Klebold's black BMW parked outside Eric's house. Harris' father Wayne was a decorated Air Force pilot. One neighbor heard one of them ask the other if he had a metal baseball bat. From the garage came sounds of hammering and breaking glass. "He was always in there with the door closed," said a fifth-grader who lived nearby. Police say it would be possible to build 30 bombs in a single afternoon, with less than \$200 worth of



LITTLE LEAGUERS Klebold, left, and Harris may not have associated with jocks in high school, but they were athletic. Dylan, says his coach Darrell Schulte, "was a great pitcher, but he could run hot and cold sometimes." Eric's baseball buddies in Plattsburgh, N.Y., had heard he was planning to visit them later this year

SPECIAL REPORT THE LITTLETON MASSACRE

materials, all easily found at hardware and sporting-goods stores.

As for the recipes, those are even easier to find for a kid with that much cyberskill. Harris' personal website, since taken down by AOL, detailed advice on building pipe bombs. "I will rig up explosives all over town," he wrote. "I don't care if I live or die." Elsewhere on the website he writes that a pipe bomb is "the easiest and deadliest way to kill a group of people," and he offers advice on shrapnel: "You can use screws, BBs, nails of all kinds ..." According to an internal information memo in the possession of district attorney Thomas Harris had spoken to a psychiatrist sometime before the shooting, and the doctor recommended that he begin taking antidepressants. The doctor said Harris had expressed anger about the world.

KLEBOLD AND HARRIS HAD charmed their way through the legal system. They were convicted of a felony in January 1998 after breaking into a van and stealing about \$400 worth of electronic equipment. They entered a juvenile-court rehabilitation program that allowed them to clear their records by participating in community-service programs and an anger-management seminar. Last Feb. 3 both were allowed to finish the program early, having been such model participants. "Eric is a very bright young man who is likely to succeed in life," said the termination report on Harris. As for Klebold, he too was "intelligent enough to make any dream a reality, but he needs to understand hard work is part of it."

If the professionals did not spot the warning signs, neither did the people who saw the boys every day. The owner of the pizza parlor where they worked says they were model employees. For all the talk of fierce racism, Harris was well liked back in Plattsburgh, where his best friends, according to the local *Press-Republican*, were black and Asian. As for the neo-Nazi Klebold, his great-grandfather was a prominent Jewish philanthropist back in Ohio.

Yet the police disclosed that the handwritten diary they had found was drenched



SPRING SNOW "Before, it was like a dream, like a movie," said one survivor after a memorial service. "Now, I'm angry"

in Nazi-philias: phrases in German punctuating a year's worth of meticulous planning for the attack on Hitler's 110th birthday. There were also annotated maps of the school showing the best places to hide and where and when the most students gathered. Again and again, hatred for the jocks emerged in the writings. Said Sheriff Stone: "They wanted to do as much damage as they could possibly do, destroy as many children as they could and go out in flames." The remains of their preparations were evident, he says: the barrel of a gun was clearly visible on the dresser of one suspect when investigators entered his room at home.

Whatever the threats and intentions, the killings were, in the end, blindly indiscriminate. They shot at the math whiz and the actress, the wrestler, the debater, jocks, brains, band members, freshmen, seniors. They shot at the head football coach; they shot at the science teacher. "They shot at everybody," says senior Nick Zupancic, "including the preps, the jocks and the people who wore Abercrombie & Fitch clothes. But it would be hard to say they singled them out, because everybody here looks like that. I mean, we're in white suburbia. Our school's wealthy. Go into the parking lot and see the cars. These kids have money. But I never thought they'd do this."

By the time the memorial services had been held and the flowers piled up in the soft spring snow in the parking lot, the recriminations were well under way. How could parents not know their garage was a bomb-

making factory? How could a school not know the hatred in its halls was more than routine teenage alienation? Who had the SWAT team members been so cautious when people were trapped and bleeding to death? What if their kids had been inside?

There was nothing the school could have done differently, insisted Columbine's principal Frank DeAngelis. "We could have had the National Guard on alert, and it wouldn't have stopped this," he said. Metal detectors would not have stopped the rampage at the door, and he doesn't think the killers stashed their arsenal ahead of

time, an argument that became harder to defend when it was reported that as a member of the audio-visual program, Harris may have had a key to the school. Maybe it would help to search routinely every car in the lot, the principal said, but that "is just not practical." DeAngelis passed the job back to students. "It's students' responsibility to report even idle threats. They must tell adults, and then it's our job to check them out." So how could glaring omens like Harris' website pages, on which he reportedly threatened another kid's life, or his violent fantasy stories and videos be missed? DeAngelis has no answer.

IN THE MEANTIME, THE COLUMBINE survivors are left with their fear and grief. The grocery stores are out of cellophane cones of flowers. Prom pictures have become obituary shots. A bunch of kids went out to dinner at Applebee's Thursday night. Everyone stared. "They knew we were kids from Columbine," says junior Scott Schulte. "No one said anything. Then a waitress dropped a booster chair. We all jumped."

Sara Martin has come to her own conclusions. The graduation speaker now hopes she won't have to speak at all. "When those guys walked into the hallways in their trench coats, with their guns and their bombs, they brought in fear and hate and pushed out everything else—every ounce of life."

In its place, students planted crosses: four pink ones for the girls, nine blue ones for the boys—and two black ones, set apart for the killers.

—Reported by Julie Grace, S.C. Gwynne, Maureen Harrington, David S. Jackson, Jeffrey Shapiro and Richard Woodbury/Littleton

WHAT CAN THE SCHOOLS DO?

Metal detectors, mesh book bags, armed police—should kids have to attend prisons? Here's what some schools have done to prevent violence

By JOHN CLOUD

AS THE COUNTRY WATCHED Littleton last week, we seemed to be hurtling toward a National Moment, a late-'90s version of, say, the sinking of the *Maine*, or the Kent State shootings during Vietnam, or Rock Hudson's death. These moments can be dangerous, as such soul searching quickly turns into lawmaking. History may remember last week because of what happens in the next few weeks, so let's try to get it right.

We might go ahead and dismiss a few of the too tiny suggestions (those mesh backpacks you keep hearing about still carry guns—just stinky ones wrapped in gym clothes) as well as the too big ones (Ohio Representative James Traficant used Littleton to try to revive the idea of prayer in schools, which the Supreme Court has ruled illegal about 38 times). But what about New Mexico Senator Jeff Bingaman's proposal to spend \$10 million turning schools into little fortresses, with security better than that at the nuclear lab in his state? Or more gun control, as New York Senator Charles Schumer urged when he reminded us that "a teenager can only do so much damage with his fists"?

By week's end, a sense of panic had crept from the 24-hr. "Terror in the Rockies" broadcasts into the statehouses as well. Some were more panicked than others: California Governor Gray Davis spoke of the importance of guidance counselors, but, reflecting the differences in the men and their states, Virginia Governor Jim Gilmore ordered superintendents to report any potentially dangerous student to police immediately. School districts are alarmed by the governmental consternation. Just last week, 150 calls were directed to Russ Ebersole, who runs a small but

suddenly lucrative Bethesda, Md., firm that takes \$500 from schools to bring in Labrador retrievers that sniff out bombs and gunpowder. Even so, after the worst school massacre in this country's history, there must be something we can do. Right?

If crime in the classroom is an epidemic, it's like tuberculosis—one we basically control, with a few flare-ups every once in a while that beat the inoculation. Overall, school violence is *not* going up. Just 10 of every 1,000 students were the victims of serious violent crime at school in 1996. And while that's 10 too many, more than twice that number (26) were victims off campus. After the shootings that occurred in the 1997-98 school year, many districts tightened security. It's having an effect, according to the National School Safety Center: there were 42 deaths in the 1997-98 academic year, and just nine—before last Tuesday—this school year, which ends soon.

What has increased over the past five years is the multiple-victim, video-game-like rampages that led up to the Littleton abomination. They are the Ebola virus of schools—horribly bloody, yes, but perhaps so determined that we can't devise general means to stop them. On Saturday, authorities in Texas announced that five 14-year-old boys had been charged with plotting a murderous assault on their junior high school. Since Littleton, dozens of copycat threats have popped up around the country. There are two categories of dealing with them: first, nurture more; second, crack down. The latter is embraced by security experts and frightened school employees. For these folks, even zero tolerance is somehow too much; they want lockdowns and detector dogs and strapped rent-a-cops to be a regular feature of school life. (President Clinton also said the Federal Government would provide more money for schools to hire police. For the record, however, Columbine High School's armed

cop couldn't do much to stop the shooters.)

Most schools blend the two approaches, to the extent that they can afford it. Trumbull High School in tony Trumbull, Conn., can afford a lot. The school has an armed, uniformed police officer at the entrance, and an 11-member team of counselors watches for warning signs and deals with problem kids. There are two guards inside, these in plainclothes; one of them,



TRUST NO ONE: Many schools like this one in California routinely use metal detectors to search for weaponry

John Kichinko, wears Winnie-the-Pooh ties to keep kids at ease.

These measures put Trumbull on the cutting edge of safety, but even there, one gets the sense that prevention is as much a matter of luck as of planning. Last year a teacher happened to notice a student photocopying material about bombmaking. The teacher spread the word, and kids stepped forward to say the boy had downloaded

the info from the Web and was building a device. Police found a ready-to-detonate bomb in his locker. He was expelled.

Across the nation, the most common violence-prevention measures are the cheapest—and the easiest for a couple of well-armed outcasts to blast past. According to a study published last year in the journal *Urban Education*, the direct-prevention plan most commonly reported

by school administrators is to place teachers in hallways. Next come alternative schools, which lump the troubled kids together under one (ideally sturdy) roof; and finally, visitor registration.

The stark limits of such measures became clear after Jonesboro and Springfield and the rest, and many schools have added paranoia to their prevention plans. All bomb threats, at one time sifted for credibility, are taken seriously at most schools. After East Montpelier, Vt., canceled school seven times because of bomb threats, officials instituted a new policy: classes move outside when threats are called in, and trucks haul in lunch and Porta Potties.

Schools everywhere are experimenting with security measures developed in juvenile jails. Unmanned metal detectors—around which students can pass weapons—are out, and random checks with wand detectors are in. Urged on by the President, many schools have adopted uniforms—or at least require tucked-in shirts, which can't hide pistols. Some districts have purchased surveillance cameras or fancy fire alarms that guard against pranks.

But critics complain that such measures erase whatever fragile trust exists between students and administrators, making it less likely for kids to offer information about students on the edge. (Even at touchy-feely Trumbull, sophomore Mike Schubert notes the dangers: "You want to keep your mouth shut, or you might end up dead somewhere.") What's more, the high-tech gizmos probably couldn't have prevented any of the shootings of the past two years.

Real prevention is much harder; it means addressing the underlying causes of violence. The boys involved in last year's shootings shared three traits: they were estranged from family and classmates (in some cases owing to poorly treated mental illness); they had immersed themselves in a violent entertainment subculture; and they had ready access to guns.

Now, of course, we enter the uncertain and fraught territory of social change—the gun debate alone is already deafening—but not all the social advocates are woolly-headed. The awkwardly named group Fight Crime: Invest in Kids counts eight crime survivors and more than a dozen police chiefs on its advisory board, including former New York City police commissioner William Bratton. The Washington-based group's four-point plan is touchingly well meaning: 1) give kids something to do after school; 2) make sure young children have

3.5 Hours the typical adolescent spends alone today

11 Fewer hours children spend with parents each week, compared with the 1960s

721% Increase in number of minutes evening news spent covering homicide, 1993-96

8,000 Murders a child has seen in all media by the end of elementary school

300% Increase in teen suicide since the 1960s

1,000% Increase in depression among children since the 1950s

access to quality child care; 3) help schools identify troubled kids early and provide counseling for them; 4) prevent child abuse.

All are things that should be done in any case. But they are just the sort of pricey domestic programs we reward politicians for flaying. Consider that in the average school district, the harried psychologist must see 10 of his charges every day just to see each of his students once a year. In California, 50% of the schools don't even have guidance counselors. It's nearly impossible in such an environment to separate the kids tinkering with bombs in the garage from kids whose only offense is a love for Marilyn Manson.

So does anything work? Sort of. Dedicated mentors can make a difference, and—though they sound hopelessly mushy—programs that help bullies deal with frustration have been shown to reduce school violence. Schools that try very hard to connect to families and communities can find potentially destructive students earlier. Not surprisingly, the districts that have had the most success are the ones with schools in or near big cities, which have had to combat violence the longest. Five years ago, DeKalb County officials in Georgia were finding so many weapons on campus that they began a campaign to alert parents.

"We spoke at churches, community groups—and we stressed gun responsibility," says Garry McGiboney, who heads the system's disciplinary tribunal. "We'd tell them, 'If you think your kids don't know you have a gun, you're kidding yourself. Or if you think they don't know where that gun is, you're also kidding yourself.'"

DeKalb officials urge kids to warn them about troubled classmates, and a civic group gives \$100 rewards for students who tattle on weapons violators. Counselors look for bullies; dogs hunt for guns. DeKalb has this success to report: five years ago, it confiscated 76 weapons; this year, it confiscated "only" eight.

That may be the best schools can do. "The society outside our schools today means the unbelievable availability of weapons and the reinforcement of the violence culture by the media," says Jose Garcia, principal of a Florida middle school that had a fatal shooting in 1997. "No principal can shut that out of a school. Nobody can." —With reporting by Cathy Booth/Los Angeles, Leslie Everton Brice/Atlanta, Jodie Morse/Trumbull, Tim Padgett/Miami and Desha Philadelphia/New York

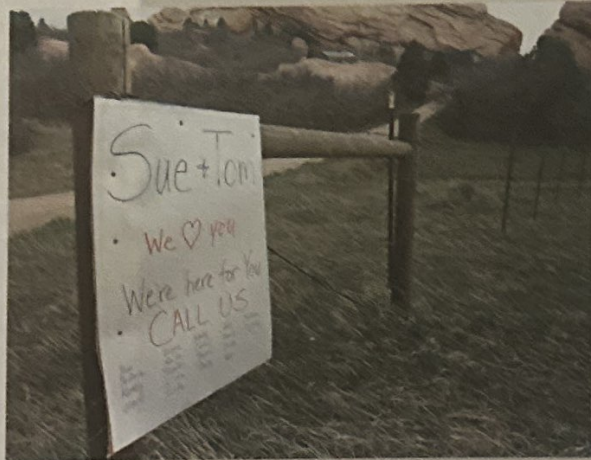
Where Were the Parents?

Could they not notice their kids' rage? Could you?

AS MUCH AS WE'VE READ AND HEARD ABOUT ERIC HARRIS AND DYLAN KLEBOLD, WE know very little about their family life. We know even less about their parents. But we do know that these two high school boys sent up flares advertising their anger and alienation, but these signs were either ignored or dismissed.

Since last Tuesday, an army of experts has marched through our living rooms to educate us on the signals our children send before they fly off the rails. Does your child show an unusual interest in guns? Is he a bully? Does he have violent fantasies? Does your child seem sad or depressed? If so, he may be in trouble, and a parent should intervene immediately. When I hear this I think: Well, duh. And I wonder: Where were these kids' parents?

Maybe Eric and Dylan suffered from some organic psychosis that even the most loving and attentive parents couldn't cure. Maybe the signs that seem so obvious to us now, in retrospect, were well obscured in the Harris and Klebold homes.



SYMPATHY CARD Outside the Klebold home, friends leave their condolences

Teenagers are good at hiding their true selves—or the selves they're trying out this month—behind the "grandma face" they wear when they're trotted out to see the relatives. Behind that pleasant mask there can be volumes of bad poetry, body piercings and tattoos.

But is it possible for parents to miss homicidal rage? I can't help asking: Where were the Harrises and Klebolds when their sons were watching *Natural Born Killers* over and over? Have the parents seen that movie? Have they ever played Doom and the other blood-soaked computer games that occupied their children? Did these "educated professionals" take a look at the hate-filled website their kids created?

Were the Harrises aware of the pipe-bomb factory that was in their two-car garage? The kid down the street was aware of it, and he's 10 years old.

So I wonder: Where the hell were the parents? And then, like most parents I know, I wonder: Where are the rest of us? Are we vigilant enough?

Most teenagers exist in a state of near constant mortification at the prospect of supervision by their parents. But surely a parent can risk his child's embarrassment, and his own discomfort, to get in his or her face a little bit. Surely we can manage to love them a little louder. To find the time to read their school papers, listen to their music, watch what they watch and get to know their friends. I have a memory of my mother, bless her, sitting at our dining-room table and reading the liner notes to *Thick as a Brick* the year my brother was 16 and deeply into Jethro Tull.

Every parent knows that raising children requires bicycle helmets, Beanie Babies, notebook paper, prayers, skill, the grace of God and plain dumb luck. But what many of us don't ever come to grips with is this: we must take responsibility for the world our children inhabit. We make the world for them. We give it to them. And if we fail them, they will break our hearts 10 different ways.

So far, the only people assuming any kind of recognizable parental responsibility for the shootings in Colorado are some of the parents of the victims. In his anguish, Michael Shoels, father of 18-year-old Isaiah, wonders aloud if there is anything he might have done to get between his son and the killers. But, no, Mr. Shoels, it's not your fault. You did your job. You knew him well. Your son knew that life isn't a video game. He was in the library working on a research paper when he was killed.

Dickinson is a new TIME contributor. She also writes a column for America Online



VIGIL: Two athletes and their girlfriends at a service for Columbine victims

A CURSE OF CLIQUES

There are good reasons to form tight-knit groups. But in America's high schools, they can be harsh

By ADAM COHEN

WHEN THE SHOOTING FINALLY stopped at Columbine High School, and students ran out of their hiding places to safety, some of the most hulking male students had stripped off their shirts. They weren't posing for the cameras. Word had spread through the school that the "Trench Coat Mafia" was hunting for athletes, and at Columbine a polo shirt—and a white baseball cap—marked the wearer as a jock.

It was the first day in Columbine history that it was dangerous to be a jock—and that kind of humiliation may have been just what the killers had in mind. Video games and the easy availability of guns may have contributed to the Littleton horror. But what role did the ingrained cliquishness of American high schools play? Part of the

story is old: the embittered outcasts against the popular kids on campus. But what kind of new conflagrations should we expect if the Revenge of the Nerds can now be played out to the firing of semiautomatics?

In the movie version of the 1950s, schools split into two camps: the fresh-scrubbed kids (frats, preppies) and the leather-clad rebels (hoods, greasers). It's more complicated these days. Columbine's 1,935 students look a lot alike—mostly white, well off and primed for success. But students have no trouble ticking off a startling number of cliques—jocks, hockey kids (a separate group), preppies, stoners, gang-bangers (gang-member wannabes), skaters (as in skateboarders) and, as they say, nerds. Other high schools have variations on these themes. California has its surfer cliques, and Austin High School in Texas has the hicks—or kickers—who show up at

school in cowboy boots, big hats and over-size belt buckles.

It's a cliché that jocks and cheerleaders rule, but it is largely true. While others plod through high school, they glide: their exploits celebrated in pep rallies and recorded in the school paper and in trophy cases. "The jocks and the cheerleaders, yes, have the most clout," says Blake McConnell, a student at Sprayberry High School near Atlanta. "They get out of punishment—even with the police. Joe Blow has a wreck and has been drinking, and he gets the book thrown at him. The quarterback gets busted, and he gets a lighter sentence."

At the other extreme are the Trench Coat Mafias of the world—the kids on the margins. Each school has its own brand of outsiders with their own names—nerds, freaks, punks, ravers. And each group has its own way of standing out. At Atlanta's Sprayberry, says sophomore Shawn Cotter, "the outcasts are mainly people who dress up differently, guys who wear makeup and dress in feminine ways, people who wear black leather and chains."

But high school outcasts have moved beyond the chess club and the audio-visual squad. Now they are wearing black T-shirts, trench coats and hard-kicking Doc Martens.

Many are also wearing face powder and black eyeliner. "A lot of it is just a front—a mass cry for attention," says McConnell. "Mostly there's nothing behind it."

Still, the worst of high school fringe groups do seem more disturbed than in the past. The awkward kids aren't just smiling inappropriately during science-lab frog dissections. Some high schools have white supremacist cliques. Then there are groups like the Straight Edge, a presence at schools like Salt Lake City's Kearns High School. They are puritanical punks who are anti-drug, anti-alcohol, and anti-tobacco—and they are violent. If you smoke or drink in their presence, some Straight Edgers will attack you with a baseball bat.

The so-called good cliques can do just as much as the outsiders to foment trouble. There really is a *Lord of the Flies* dynamic at work among kids. Even nice kids seem to spend a lot of time being cruel to their less socially prominent peers. Social science literature is filled with the gritty details—categorized under headings like "the spiral of rejection." Patti and Peter Adler, sociologists who do field research on cliques, found that a 17-year-old girl in one group they observed could raise her status by getting a boy to spend money on her and break up with another girl for her—and then dump him. Another clique member told a researcher that "one of the main things to do is to keep picking on unpopular kids because it's just fun to do."

The dynamics between cliques are often very raw, particularly for the groups at the extremes of the social spectrum: jocks and outcasts. Even at the relatively well-integrated Liberty High School in Bethlehem, Pa., it is not unheard of for the punks—who often sport black clothing, tattoos and spiky hair—to be taunted in the hallways. "They call 'em dirty, say stuff like 'Why don't you bathe?'" says a student. Often it is the athletes who dish out the abuse. Haakon Espeland, 14, switched out of Brooklyn's Fort Hamilton High, where he was one of the "freaks." The reason he fled: a stream of abuse, starting on his first day at school, when "all these huge people beat on me, basically for being there."

Adolescents are psychologically fragile, and mistreatment from schoolmates leaves deep wounds. Sometimes, says Augustana University education professor Larry Brendtro, "kids who feel powerless and rejected are capable of doing horrible things." Jason Sanchez, 15, a student at Phoenix's Mountain Pointe High School, understands why Harris and Klebold snapped: "If you go to school, and people make fun of you every day, and you don't have friends, it drives you to insanity."

There is probably no way to stop high schools from breaking down into cliques. We may be hardwired for it. As early as preschool, researchers have found, kids begin rejecting other kids. And even in kindergarten, children have a good idea which of their classmates are popular and which are not. But schools can take the edge off the situation through inclusiveness. "I can't remember ever going to a pep rally and having the skaters show off their talents," says Curtis Cook, a parent at Phoenix's Desert Vista High School. Says New York City psychoanalyst Leon Hoffman: "All kids need to belong, and if they can't belong in a positive way at the school, they'll find a way to belong

to a marginal group like a cult or a gang."

The Columbine High shootings seem to have given at least some cliques around the country pause. At Trumbull High School in Connecticut, the Goths have stopped wearing their trademark trench coats. And students in more mainstream cliques may be a little more cautious about taunting students who don't fit in—if only out of an instinct for self-preservation. "I'm not going to talk about them anymore," says Nathalie Kirnon, a Trumbull freshman. "They might do it here." —Reported by Harriet Barovick, Desha Philadelphia and Elaine Rivera/New York, Laura Laughlin/Phoenix, Jodie Morse/Trumbull and David Nordan/Atlanta

We're Goths and Not Monsters

IN ANY OTHER WEEK, THE DISCLAIMER ON THE DOOR OF INKUBUS HABERDASHERY, a Gothic fashion store in Miami's Coconut Grove district, would have seemed as out of place as the boutique itself. THE GOTHIC COMMUNITY IN NO WAY CONDONES THE USE OF VIOLENCE, it read. WE ARE APPALLED BY THE KILLINGS AND BY THE INFERENCE THAT THE MURDERERS BELONGED TO OUR CULTURE. Inside, owner Malaise Graves lamented the spotlight the Littleton killings had suddenly thrown on Goth culture. "I'm afraid this violent stereotyping of us is only going to get worse now," she sighed.



DEAD WRONG: Goths like Alejandro, shown in his L.A. coffin, resent being linked with the killings

that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were Goths—simply because they wore black trench coats, painted their fingernails black and listened to Marilyn Manson music—got real Goths everywhere hot under the black leather collar. "Teenagers tend to go after the most powerful images they can," explains Seth Baker, a Los Angeles Goth. "They put together a lot of images." Real Goths have nothing to do with violence.

Still, if Klebold and Harris were wolves in Goth's

clothing, there was plenty to identify with. "We romanticize the darkness of humanity," says Peter Stover, 21, a photography major at Chicago's Columbia College, who has midnight blue hair and regulation pale skin. "We're creatures of the night."

The current manifestation of Gothic culture began with the British punk scene in the early '80s. Bands like Bauhaus, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and Joy Division created the atmospheric doom-rock sound. A clothing style evolved that was part Johnny Rotten, part Anne Rice and all black. Acolytes sometimes took an interest (purely academic) in subjects such as Satanism and blood drinking, which ensured this was one rebellion that would never enter the mainstream. In the '90s shock rockers like Manson appropriated the image and blurred the lines—until any shaggy-haired, trench-coat-wearing teen could be considered a Goth by his peers.

—By Chris Taylor. With reporting by Wendy Cole/Chicago and Tim Padgett/Miami

Lance Morrow

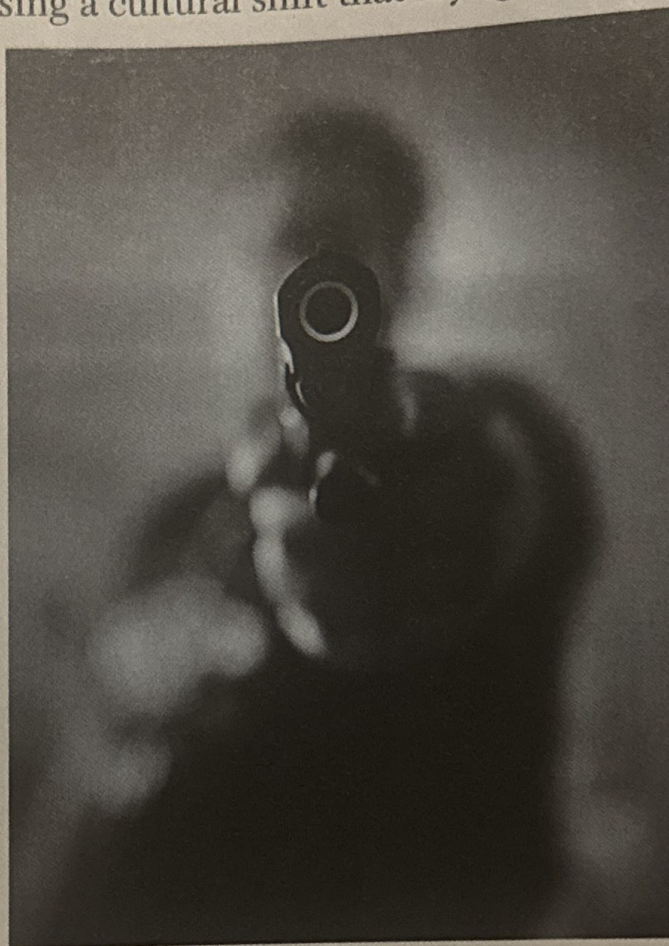
Coming to Clarity About Guns

Are we witnessing a cultural shift that says gunmakers are to blame?

AN ITEM NEGLECTED IN THE rush of the week's news: it was revealed that Russell Eugene Weston Jr., who stormed the U.S. Capitol last summer, killing two police officers, did it because he feared being contaminated by "Black Heva," a blight that he considered "the deadliest disease known to mankind." Black Heva (which exists only in Weston's mind) spreads by way of the rotting flesh of cannibals' victims; Weston shot the policemen because they were cannibals preventing him from getting to the "ruby satellite," a device that is the key to halting Heva-breeding cannibalism.

Evil on paper looks impressive (one of mankind's most important words, invested with the dignity of mystery and theology). But evil in actuality, when it touches down on earth like a tornado for a moment—as it did in Weston's visit to the Capitol, or last week in Littleton—may have a style so tacky, so moronic or so indelibly crazy that it gives off a radiant tabloid weirdness. This almost novelistic sheen of the loony makes the tragedies curiously hard to evaluate. The evil effect is evident—innocent blood everywhere; the cause, in the case of Littleton anyway, remains obscure. Evil is, after all, a mystery. The uniqueness of individual evils owes something to chaos theory. Perhaps we should not try to explain something like the shootings but should sit very still, and pray, and await the arrival of clarity.

Nah. We all begin chattering at once: American society in the late '90s is a busy chat room set up for just this kind of thing (Oklahoma City, O.J.), with noisy experts on tap, interrupting one another from different quadrants of the screen. We round up the usual suspects—in the current case, our cretinous popular culture; the Internet, with its rancid cul-de-sacs; violent movies; idiot television; vicious rap; ubiquitous sex. One high school counselor cast a wide net on MSNBC: "It's all those things, ekcedra, ekcedra, ekcedra." The "ekcedra" includes adolescence itself, a form of tem-



SCOTT HOUSTON—EVGA

porary insanity that in America is rendered even crazier by all of the above.

But the massacre in Colorado did raise a serious issue, yet again: gun control. Newspapers all over the world published sanctimonious editorials about the "American gun culture." The National Rifle Association went on sensitivity alert; in a rare moment of self-effacement it canceled the festive public events and gun show planned around its annual meeting, but not the meeting itself, which by coincidence is scheduled for this week in Denver.

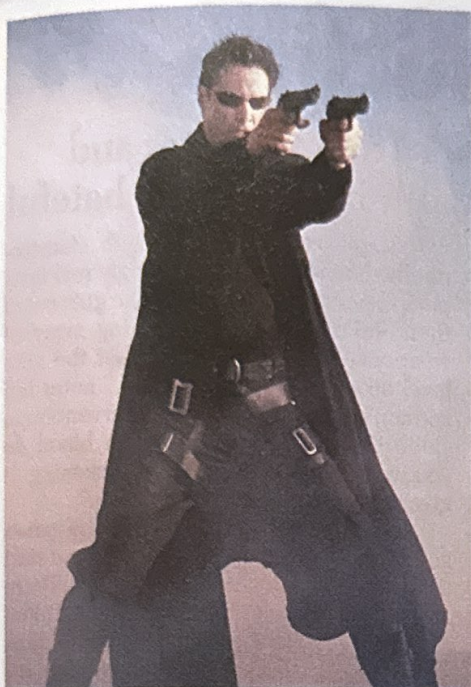
The anti-gun forces took some energy from public outrage over the shootings. California's assembly approved a bill designed to limit handgun sales. The gun lobby in Colorado had been expecting to get passage of three bills (to loosen restrictions on concealed-weapons permits, to ban local lawsuits against manufacturers and to pre-empt local ordinances on firearms). State legislators quickly withdrew two of

them, and Governor Bill Owens promised to veto the third. Earlier in April, Missouri voters defeated a referendum to lift a constitutional ban on concealed weapons. So far this year, New Mexico, Kansas and Nebraska have defeated bills that would allow concealed weapons. The struggle goes on, state by state.

We may be witnessing the beginning of one of those tectonic shifts in our culture and morality: the terror haunting the gun industry is the precedent of tobacco. At some point in the last couple of generations, smoking became disreputable in American life—a sort of moral consensus formed. If juries were to start awarding damages to cities, or to individual gunshot victims, extracting millions from gun manufacturers, or at least forcing them to mount expensive defenses—hundreds of suits, then it is possible that the N.R.A. and other defenders of the gun might abandon their cold-dead-hand absolutism and begin to compromise a little. At least one Brooklyn jury has already issued a warning: last February it ordered three gun companies to pay a young gunshot victim \$500,000 after finding that they had engaged in the "negligent distribution" of their product.

If N.R.A. president Charlton Heston had a canner sense of public relations, he would knock himself out campaigning to stop the sale of semiautomatic weapons, ban armor-piercing bullets and do all possible to keep firearms away from criminals, children and psychotics. He would legitimize his own case by pre-empting the best ideas of the other side.

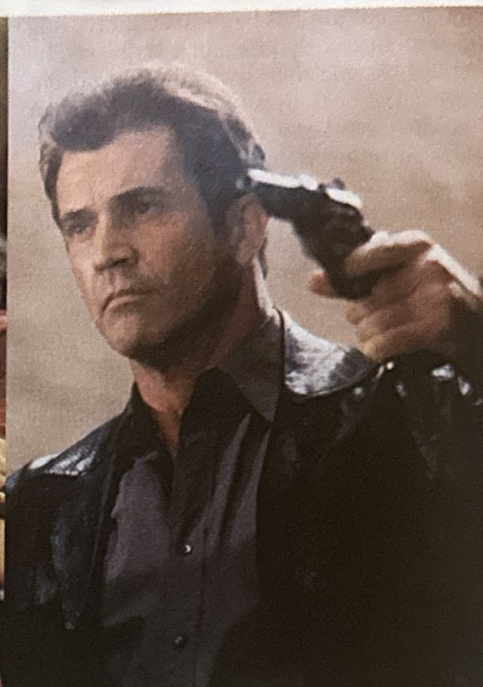
I live on a farm and own four long guns. I learned to shoot when I was 10 years old under the tutelage of the N.R.A. It was not a flawless education: when I was 13, I nearly blew a friend's head off, by accident, with his father's .38 revolver. (I was lucky enough to be permitted to learn a lesson the hard way; my friend was plain lucky.) I find that I sympathize with both the gun culture and the anti-gun culture. I do wish the gun culture were a lot more intelligent.



THE MATRIX: Keanu Reeves is hunted by droids in virtual reality—they gotta die!



THE RAGE: *Carrie 2* jock Dylan Bruno taunts poor Emily Bergl—he's gotta die!



PAYBACK: The bad guys owe gangster Mel Gibson \$70,000—they gotta die!

BANG, YOU'RE DEAD

Revenge fantasies are proliferating in movies and on TV. But should they be blamed for Littleton?

By **RICHARD CORLISS**

THE YOUNG AND THE OLDER ALWAYS EYE one another across a gaping chasm. Gray heads shake in perplexity, even in a week of mourning, even over the mildest expressions of teen taste. Fashion, for example. Here are these nice kids from suburban Denver, heroically documenting the tragedy for TV, and they all seem to belong to the Church of Wearing Your Cap Backward. A day later, as the teens grieve en masse, oldsters ask, "When we were kids, would we have worn sweats and jeans to a memorial service for our friends?" And of course the trench-coat killers had their own distinctive clothing: Johnny Cash by way of Quentin Tarantino. Should we blame the Columbine massacre on haberdashery?

No, but many Americans want to pin the blame for this and other agonizing splatter feasts on pop culture. Adults look at the revenge fantasies their kids see in the 'plexes, listen (finally) to the more extreme music, glance over their kids' shoulders at Druid websites and think, "Seems repulsive to me. Maybe pop culture pulled the trigger."

Who wouldn't want to blame self-pro-

claimed Antichrist superstar Marilyn Manson? Listen to *Lunchbox*, and get the creeps: "The big bully try to stick his finger in my chest/Try to tell me, tell me he's the best/ But I don't really give a good goddamn cause/ I got my lunchbox and I'm armed real well.../ Next motherf_____ gonna get my metal/... Pow pow pow." Not quite *Stardust*.

Sift through teen movies of the past 10 years, and you could create a hindsight game plan for Littleton. Peruse *Heathers* (1989), in which a charming sociopath engineers the death of jocks and princesses. Study carefully, as one of the Columbine murderers reportedly did, *Natural Born Killers* (1994), in which two crazy kids cut a carnage swath through the Southwest as the media ferociously dog their trail. Sample *The Basketball Diaries* (1995), in which druggy high schooler Leonardo DiCaprio daydreams of strutting into his homeroom in a long black coat and gunning down his hated teacher and half the kids. *The Rage: Carrie 2* (now in theaters) has jocks viciously taunting outsiders until one girl kills herself by jumping off the high school roof and another wreaks righteous revenge by using her telekinetic powers to pulverize a couple dozen kids.

Grownups can act out revenge fantasies too. In *Payback*, Mel Gibson dishes it out (pulls a ring out of a punk's nose, shoots his rival's face off through a pillow) and takes it (gets punched, switch-bladed, shot and, ick, toe-hammered). *The Matrix*, the first 1999 film to hit \$100 million at the box office, has more kung fu than gun fu but still brandishes an arsenal of firepower in its tale of outsiders against the Internet droids.

In Littleton's wake, the culture industry has gone cautious. CBS pulled an episode of *Promised Land* because of a plot about a shooting in front of a Denver school. The WB has postponed a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* episode with a schoolyard-massacre motif. Movie-studio honchos, who furiously resist labeling some serious adult films FOR ADULTS ONLY, went mum last week when asked to comment on any connection between violent movies and violent teen behavior. That leaves us to explain things.

Revenge dramas are as old as *Medea* (she tore her sons to pieces), as hallowed as *Hamlet* (seven murders), as familiar as *The Godfather*. High drama is about the conflict between shades of good and evil, often within the same person. But it's easier to dream up a scenario of slaving evil and imperishable good. This is the moral and commercial equation of melodrama: the greater the outrage suffered, the greater the justification for revenge. You grind me down at first; I grind you up at last. This time it's personal.

Fifty years ago, movies were homogenous, meant to appeal to the whole family.

DIGITAL DUNGEONS

Gory fantasy beckons to kids from websites and video games. It can be playful. But often it's hateful

Now pop culture has been Balkanized; it is full of niches, with different groups watching and playing their own things. And big movies, the ones that grab \$20 million on their first weekend, are guy stuff. Young males consume violent movies, in part, for the same reason they groove to outlaw music: because their parents can't understand it—or stand it. To kids, an R rating for violence is like the Parental Advisory on CDs: a Good Housebreaking Seal of Approval.

The cultural gap, though, is not just between old and young. It is between the haves and the self-perceived have-nots of teen America. Recent teen films, whether romance or horror, are really about class warfare. In each movie, the cafeteria is like a tiny former Yugoslavia, with each clique its own faction: the Serbian jocks, Bosnian bikers, Kosovar rebels, etc. And the horror movies are a microcosm of ethnic cleansing.

Movies may glamorize mayhem while serving as a fantasy safety valve. A steady diet of megaviolence may coarsen the young psyche—but some films may instruct it. *Heathers* and *Natural Born Killers* are crystal-clear satires on psychopathy, and *The Basketball Diaries* is a mordant portrait of drug addiction. *Payback* is a grimly synoptic parody of all gangster films. In three weeks, 15 million people have seen *The Matrix* and not gone berserk. And *Carrie 2* is a crappy remake of a 1976 hit that led to no murders.

Flash: movies don't kill people. Guns kill people. "What's more troubling," asks Steve Tisch, producer of *Forrest Gump* and *American History X*, "a kid with a sawed-off shotgun or a kid with a cassette of *The Basketball Diaries*? It's not just movies. Lots of other wires have to short before a kid goes out and does something like this. It's a piece of a much bigger, more complex puzzle."

Some images in recent films are both repellent and (the tricky part) exciting. Some song lyrics express a rage that's not easy to take as irony. And, yes, a movie or song or TV show may inspire some sick twist to earn satanic stardom with a gun. But most kids deserve the respect their parents wanted when they were kids: to be able to consume bits of pop culture and decide on their own whether it's poetry, entertainment or junk.

There is a lapse in parental logic that goes from "I don't get it" to "It must be evil," and from that to "It makes kids evil." Today, moms and dads gaze at the withdrawn souls across the kitchen-table chasm. They see what their kids wear; they may know what their kids see. But, in another Manson lyric, they "fail to see the anguish in my eyes." Parents should try looking into their kids' eyes. If they do, and do more, they might even "see the tragic/ Turnin' into magic." —With reporting by David E. Thigpen/New York

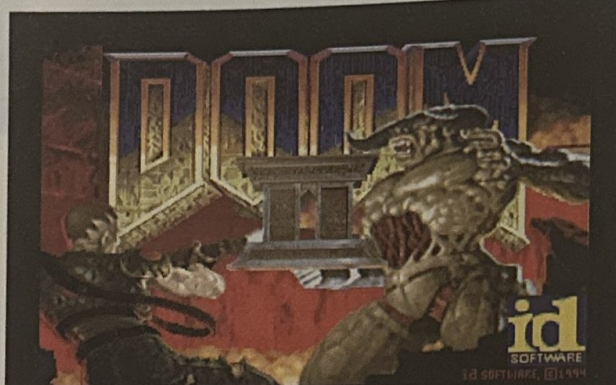
IT'S LATE 1998—LONG BEFORE THE phrase Columbine school shooting enters your lexicon—and you're a researcher at a hate-group-monitoring center. Your job is to trawl the Web, surf literally thousands of "anarchy" links and make a note of the really nasty ones. One day you stumble across a high school student's website that contains a lot of hateful teen posturing and some plug-ins for a best-selling violent computer game. Do you bookmark it?

The answer is no—at least, not for researchers at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, who came across Eric Har-

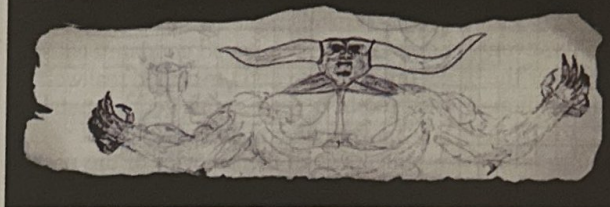
works, players wander through claustrophobic corridors in a terrifyingly real first-person perspective, blasting the guts out of their enemies with a blistering array of weaponry. "You can actually set the gore level on some of [these games]," notes Jeff Inman, a specialist in youth intervention in Cobb County, Ga. "How much blood do you want to see splattered? It's sickening. It gives kids a lack of respect for life."

Even more ominous is when the games go beyond serving up generic gore and start trafficking in fantasies of bias crimes. There are video games out there that make Doom

look like an art-house flick. For example, white supremacists can stage virtual lynchings with a game called Hang Leroy, clandestinely available on Klan sites. Racist versions of Doom also exist, with a plug-in that changes the color of the victims. "Hate is available in many flavors on the Internet," says Raymond Franklin, a Maryland police executive and publisher of the *Hate Directory*. He says that neo-Nazis could take advantage of what was until recently a largely young white male audience online—a fertile recruiting ground. Rabbi Cooper too is worried about such groups' having "unsustainable full-time access. America's young people in the most powerful cultural



GAME BOY: Eric Harris was such a fan of Doom that he put sketches of its characters on his website, below



ris' home page on America Online some six months ago but didn't include it on their CD-ROM directory of hate sites. "It didn't have explicit threats against any individual or institution," explains the center's associate dean, Rabbi Abraham Cooper. "We see very, very ominous websites regularly—by the hundreds."

AOL yanked Harris' site within hours of last week's shooting, preserving its contents for an FBI investigation. But copies were already circulating across cyberspace—along with a few sick hoaxes—and their contents made many folks eager to blame the Internet for this tragedy. Others pointed to violent video games, particularly Doom and Quake, Harris' favorites. In these seminal

medium ever created."

And yet there is no way of calculating how much of a role was played by propaganda and video games in Harris and Dylan Klebold's killing spree. Quake and its ilk may have helped desensitize a generation—but you're blasting cyborgs, not classmates, and you're certainly not constructing pipe bombs. Harris' online essay on how to make these devices suggests that he made most of his discoveries through trial and error, not on the Net. The computer age may be giving kids a new outlet for their dark fantasies, but that hardly means it is turning them into killers.

—By Chris Taylor. With reporting by David Nordan/Atlanta, Elaine Shannon/Washington and James Willwerth/Los Angeles

What Politicians Can't Do

They chose soul searching over easy fixes. But should they do the parenting?

THERE ARE MOMENTS WHEN POLITICS seems a grand calling, but the eruption of evil among schoolchildren isn't one of them, and so a curious and altogether appropriate quiet settled over American politicians in the wake of the nightmare at Columbine High. Not absolute silence, mind you—there's only so much we can expect of our politicians—but quiet: a kind of humility that suggested they knew they had come up against the limits of their trade.

The response of Richard Gephardt was typical. As ranking Democrat in the House of Representatives, Gephardt felt compelled to release a statement, but there was about his words something wan and attenuated. "Ultimately," he said, "the answer will not be found in state legislatures or in the halls of Congress. The answer lies somewhere in the hopelessness and the hateful hearts of the children who have lost their way." Gephardt is an activist liberal, a voluptuary of governmental solutions, so his concession carries an interesting significance. You saw it from the political right too. "There's not a magic wand you can wave," said Gary Bauer, a conservative activist who coincidentally launched his presidential campaign the day after the Littleton murders. Even Pat Buchanan, after firing off a few half-hearted rounds at the "poison of our popular culture," could offer little more than a shake of the head. "There was something sick and wrong inside those boys," he said. "I don't know how to stop it."

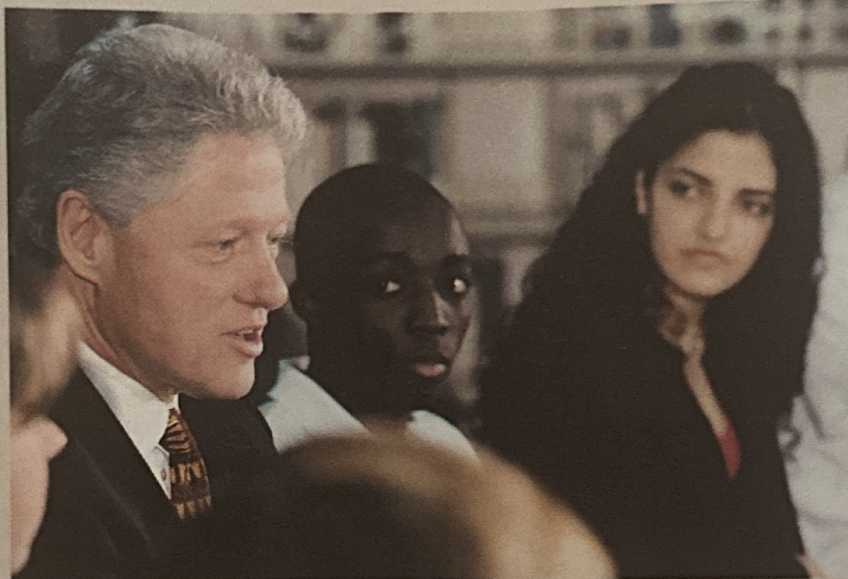
As always, it was President Clinton, the most finely tuned politician of the age and the bully pulpit's current occupant, who best captured the prevailing political tone. From global warming to lagging test scores, from car safety seats to unmet alimony payments, the President is quick to launch a program for any problem, no matter how obscure, with three points or five points or seven—the more points the better. And, yes, he did urge school boards to apply for

federal grants that would put armed police officers in schools. But in the face of the carnage, he mostly dropped the wonkery and assumed the role of National Grief Counselor. "It is very important to explain to children, all over America, what has happened," he said, "and to reassure our own children that they are safe." If anyone thought it odd that the government's chief executive officer was advising parents on what to whisper to their children as they tucked them in at night, nobody said so. Under the circumstances, the President's

their language is drawn more often from the lexicon of pop psychology than from traditional politics. In announcing his candidacy, Dan Quayle said, "You know, even though we are No. 1, we know that something is missing. Something fundamentally isn't quite there." And where is *there*? Bill Bradley has an answer: "For starters we can look deeper into the soul of America," he said last week, "to peel back the layers of denial and defense" that obscure our national dialogue. And Republican candidate John Kasich too speaks frankly of "saving the soul of America."

This is more than platitude, or, more accurately, it is a new kind of platitude. It represents at once a new humility and a new hubris on the part of pols: a recognition on the one hand that some difficulties are not susceptible to the manipulation of public policy and, on the other, a determination that they will come to our rescue anyway. With so much going so right in the U.S.—with the creation of fabulous wealth, with falling rates of divorce and crime and abortion—politicians are aching to stay in the game. You are well advised not to dwell on the many contradictions—how it is, for example, that politicians who for years promised to keep government out of our bedrooms now seem fit to invite their way into our souls. They have cast themselves as empathists; soul fixing is their job.

Nearly 25 years ago, Jimmy Carter got elected by promising to create a government as good and decent as the American people. Our current candidates seem to be promising the reverse: to make the American people as good and decent as the political class that tries to lead them. I am not sure this is an improvement. But politics is a market-tested enterprise, and politicians respond to the demands of their consumers. Their bet is that America today wants a Therapist in Chief. Another horror like Littleton, and they may be right.



THERAPIST IN CHIEF Clinton offered comfort to Virginia high schoolers last week and advised parents on how to talk to their children about the Littleton tragedy

words seemed tasteful and well chosen.

This is something new in American politics, but it didn't start with Littleton. It has been in train for many months or maybe longer, and it crosses party lines. A bipartisan consensus—that holy grail of establishmentarians everywhere—has been reached that politicians can no longer concern themselves merely, even primarily, with the workaday stuff of politics: marginal tax rates, crime control, defense expenditures, environmental and labor laws, the international balance of power. Our politicians are transcending politics. They are turning their attention, for better or for worse, to matters of the human heart.

Consider, if you can force yourself to do so 19 months before the election, the current roster of presidential candidates. When they lapse into the hortatory mode,

DIRCK HALSTEAD FOR TIME