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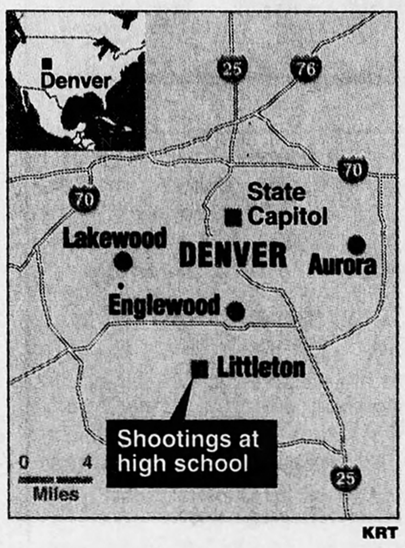
Up to 25 are killed in school slaughter



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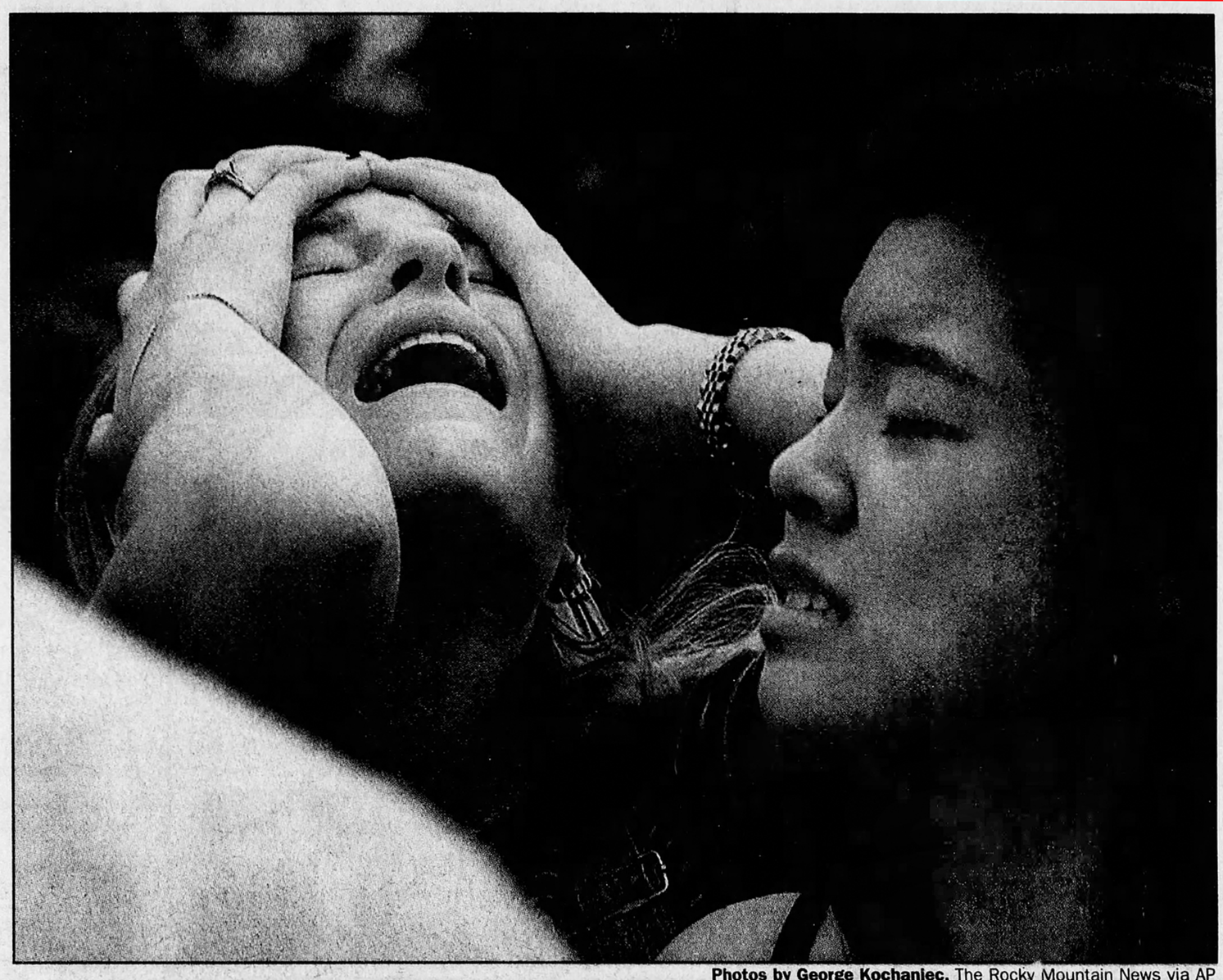


Photos by George Kochaniec, The Rocky Mountain News via AP

Grief and shock filled the Columbine High School campus; dozens of students hid in classrooms before escaping

Teen gunmen joked during the rampage, survivor says

© 1999 The Dallas Morning News

LITTLETON, Colo. — Two heavily armed students dressed in black stormed through a suburban Denver high school yesterday in a bloody rampage that left as many as 25 students and teachers dead.

If the death toll holds, it would be the worst attack ever on an American school.

The gunmen wounded at least 20 others, many critically, and laughed and joked as they fired and threw pipe bombs, students said. Police later found the attackers' bodies in the library of Columbine High School. They apparently killed themselves at the end of what Jefferson County Sheriff John Stone described as "a suicide mission."

Classmates and Denver media identified the gunmen as Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, both juniors at the school. Police refused to identify them.

They left behind scenes of incredible carnage, with bodies draped one atop another in the school's stairwells, in the cafeteria and the library, Stone said. And the shaken students who survived the attack spoke of the gunmen's savage and casual cruelty.

Harris

Klebold

"One of them opened his cape and had a shotgun. Finally I started figuring out these guys shot to kill, for no reason," said a student, Nick Foss. The gunman "didn't say anything. When he looked at me, the guy's eyes were just dead."

"There was a girl crouched beneath a desk, and the guy came over and said, 'Peekaboo!' and shot her in the neck," said sophomore Bryon Kirland, 15.

Aaron Cohn, a 17-year-old junior, said he was in the library when the two gunmen — one of them a youth who lived three doors down from him — entered wearing trench coats.

First, he said, they threw pipe bombs that wounded some of his classmates. Then one attacker called out, " 'All the jocks stand up — I'm going to kill every single one of you,' " Cohn said.

The killers began shooting. When someone survived the initial round and cried out in pain, he said, "they just kept shooting them until they were dead. They were laughing, hooting and hollering.

"They were having the best time of their lives," he said.

Most of the victims were white, though the assailants referred to one black student with a racial epithet, Cohn said. "Then bang, bang, bang."

"Is he dead?" the shooter asked his partner, according to the witness.

"Yeah, he's dead," came the answer.

Other students said the gunmen specifically targeted athletes and minorities at the school, which is mostly white. Late yesterday, police were searching

See RAMPAGE, Page 15A

Teens knew 'Mafia' as different but not violent

LITTLETON, Colo. (AP) — They are called the "Trench Coat Mafia," a group of about 10 students who wear long black coats, keep to themselves and follow shock rocker Marilyn Manson.

Despite their dark lifestyle, they had not shown an inclination for violence before yesterday, according to some of their fellow students at Columbine High School.

Authorities and school district officials said they had never heard of the group. A reference to it in last year's Columbine yearbook reveals nothing more than general teen-age exuberance.

Even so, some students said they believed the two gunmen who went on a shooting rampage at Columbine were members of the group.

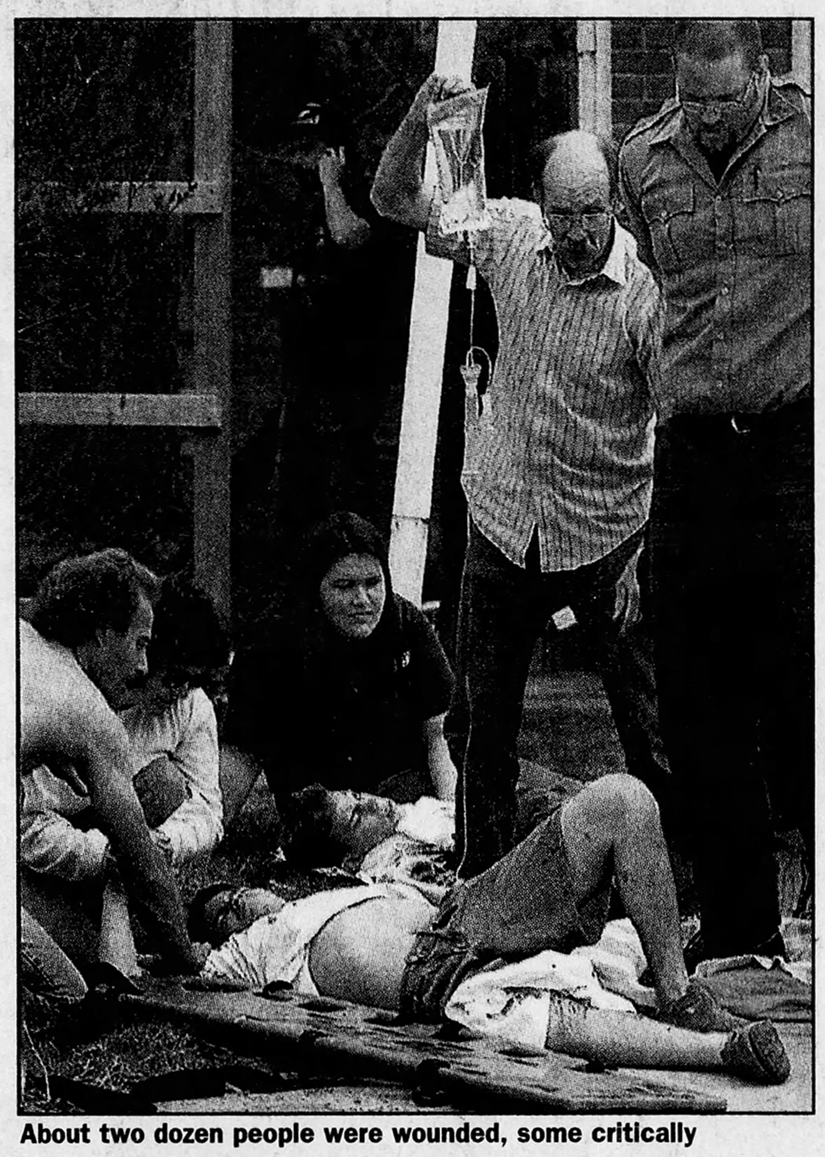
Sean Kelly, a 16-year-old student, said he saw several members of the group make a video about their guns in a video production class. He also said several members of the group recently bragged that they had gotten new guns.

Some students said the killers targeted minorities and athletes. Kelly said he heard Trench Coat Mafia members making "generally derogatory remarks" about blacks and Hispanics.

Andrew Beard, a student, said on CNN's "Larry King Live" that members of the group "talked about how jocks, how all the football players, were in a world of their own, thinking they were on top of everything and nothing mattered to them."

A dedication to the Trench Coat Mafia in the 1998 Columbine yearbook lists 13 members and carries the following message: "Who says we are different?

See 'MAFIA,' Page 14A



About two dozen people were wounded, some critically

INSIDE

Tragedy had recognizable roots
"There will be evidence that the young people made threats, and other young people heard them," says a Tucson psychologist. **Page 14A.**

How TV became part of the story
Columbine High has TVs in every room, and trapped students apparently tuned in to watch the news live. Authorities feared the shooters were watching, too. **Page 15A.**

President Clinton speaks out
If it can happen in Littleton, it can happen anywhere, the president tells the nation. **Page 15A.**

What will TUSD do?
Officials will talk to students and review safety procedures today. **Page 15A.**

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Local and wire reports

This advice comes from psychologists Kevin Leman of Tucson and Jeffrey Dolgan of Denver.

- For kindergartners and preschoolers, don't overdo it. Tell them the basics, that someone got angry and hurt other people.
- Give more details to older children, but tell them they don't have to watch or read the news if they don't want to.
- Ask children to come and talk to you if they feel overwhelmed.
- Instruct children to stay away from trouble.
- Advise them to tell an adult if they hear other students talk about doing something wrong.
- Do a gut check on yourself. Are you spending enough time with your children? Do you know what's going on in their lives?

KOSOVO QUICKLY

The Associated Press

Yesterday's developments related to Kosovo:

- NATO spokesman Jamie Shea says Serb forces are shelling hills where ethnic Albanians fled, marching the refugees on roads and putting them on trains to the border, then closing the frontier to them. He also says there are reports of 700 ethnic Albanian boys being used as "human shields or as blood banks for Serb casualties."
- NATO launches daylight attacks in Pristina and other parts of Kosovo. The private Yugoslav news agency FoNet says one person was killed and two injured in an attack on a government building in Pristina. NATO planes also bomb targets near Kosovo's Belacevac coal mine, state-run media says.
- Secretary of State Madeleine Albright offers Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic a choice: Give in to NATO or give up power. Seven senators call for giving President Clinton authority to use "all necessary force," which could open the way to ground forces.
- The U.N. refugee agency declares its camps in Macedonia full beyond capacity, leaving 2,000 to 3,000 new arrivals from Kosovo stuck at the border with no food, water or blankets.
- An Albanian soldier was wounded in an exchange of fire across the Yugoslav-Albanian border south of the Kosovo city of Djakovica, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe reports.

Full coverage on Page 10A

Drug initiative's savings cited, but may not exist

By Howard Fischer
Capitol Media Services

PHOENIX — Voter-approved legislation to keep first- and second-time drug offenders out of prison has saved Arizona taxpayers $2.5 million, a report by the staff of the Arizona Supreme Court says.

But the report, released yesterday, assumes that every one of the 551 people sentenced under the terms of Proposition 200 would otherwise have gone to prison.

In fact, Mary Judge Ryan, the chief deputy Pima County attorney, said the reverse is true. She said most people who are convicted for the first time of possession of drugs for personal use would wind up back on the streets.

If even half of those convicted would not have wound up in prison, the entire claimed net gain would be wiped out.

Barbara Broderick, director of the Supreme Court's adult services division, also acknowledged the study does not address whether people placed into treatment programs instead of being sent to prison are more likely to stay clean.

Proponents of the 1996 initiative said the key to stopping people from using and abusing drugs is treatment and not incar-

See DRUGS, Page 14A

Series delayed

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

It Stops With You

The Star's series on domestic violence – and what Tucson is doing to stop it – is being postponed one day because of other important news. The series resumes tomorrow on Page One.

WEATHER

Slightly cooler. Today is expected to be mostly sunny, with winds that could reach 25 mph. Look for a high in the upper 80s. Yesterday's high was 92. The low was 56. Details on **Page 17A.**

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