

# Massacre at Columbine High

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LITTLETON, Colo. (AP) -- Worried about bombs and booby traps, specially trained officers painstakingly checked thousands of lockers and castoff backpacks today in a suburban high school where at least 16 people were killed in the deadliest school rampage on record.

Victims' bodies were left in the school overnight as agonized parents braced for the worst. Students streamed into Clement Park next to the school early today to leave flowers and share their feelings about the shootings.

``It helps to talk about it," said Brandon Reisbeck, a 19-year-old senior who bolted from his choir class to safety after he heard gunshots.

The investigation was delayed by the thorough police sweep of the school, which was prompted by the discovery of bombs in the parking lot and on the bodies of the suspected gunmen.

``Some of these devices are on timing devices, some are incendiary devices and some are pipe bombs," Jefferson County Sheriff John Stone told ABC's ``Good Morning America." ``Some are like hand grenades that have got shrapnel in them wrapped around butane containers."

On Tuesday, two teen-agers in black trench coats laughed and hooted as they opened fire on classmates at Columbine High School, killing at least 16 people, including themselves.

After the siege ended, police said that as many as 25 people may have been killed. Early this morning, they revised the death toll to at least 16, based on a count of bodies.

Today, students struggled to understand the rampage.

Crystal Woodman, a junior who was in the library when the gunmen burst in, said this morning she can't get their voices out of her head.

``They were just, like, they thought it was funny," Woodman told ``Good Morning America." ``They were just, like `Who's next? Who's ready to die?' They were just, like, `We've waited to do this our whole lives.' And every time they'd shoot someone, they'd holler, like it was, like, exciting."

Most of the bodies were found in the library. The attackers marched in with guns and pipe bombs, demanding that ``all jocks stand up. We're going to kill every one of you," student Aaron Cohn said.

A gunman looked under a desk in the library and said ``Peek-a-boo," then fired, Cohn said. Anyone who cried or moaned was shot again. One girl begged for her life, but a gunshot ended her cries.

Cohn said one killer put a pistol to his head but did not shoot him. Instead, he said, the shooter turned his attention to a black student, saying, ``I hate niggers." Cohn heard three shots but couldn't see what happened.

Bombs were found in and around the school, including in two cars in the school parking lot. More than 11 hours after the shootings, a bomb on a timer blew up, but no one was injured.

Meantime, frantic parents awaited word of their children, watching as busloads of tearful students were reunited with their families.

At least 23 people were taken to hospitals, most of them with gunshot wounds. One girl suffered nine shrapnel wounds. At least nine victims were in critical or serious condition; one was in guarded condition.

The dead included at least one faculty member, Superintendent Jane Hammond said.

Students and Denver media identified the gunmen as Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. The two exchanged shots with police and were later found dead in the library with self-inflicted gunshot wounds and bombs around their bodies, sheriff's spokesman Steve Davis said.

``It appears to be a suicide mission," Stone said.

While the motive was unclear, several students said Harris and Klebold were members of a group calling itself the ``Trenchcoat Mafia," outcasts who bragged about guns and bombs and hated blacks and Hispanics, as well as athletes.

Police who searched Harris' home said they found bomb-making material. Students said the group was fascinated with World War II and the Nazis and noted that Tuesday was Adolf Hitler's birthday.

The pair, wearing fatigues and ankle-length black coats, opened fire in the parking lot around 11:30 a.m. before entering the school cafeteria. Bullets ricocheted off lockers as students raced toward the exits.

Student Nick Foss saw one of the gunmen pull a sawed-off shotgun from under his coat.

``Finally I started figuring out these guys shot to kill for no reason," Foss said. The gunman ``didn't say anything. When he looked at me, the guy's eyes were just dead."

The killers fired as they walked into the cafeteria and continued shooting as they moved upstairs into the library. Cohn said he heard one girl begging for her life and then a bang.

``They were laughing after they shot. It was like they were having the time of their life," he said.

Dozens of students hid in classrooms before escaping with the help of police in an armored car. Others were trapped for hours while SWAT teams searched for the gunmen and their bombs. Some had called their parents on cellular phones from inside the building to whisper they were OK.

Hundreds of police officers from throughout the Denver area surrounded the school, which has 1,800 students. As TV images of the scene were broadcast nationwide, helicopter ambulances used a sports field as a landing pad, and officers in helmets and camouflage gear took cover behind squad cars.

Students who fled the building wept and held their hands above their heads while police frisked them.

In Washington, President Clinton said: ``Perhaps now America will wake up to the dimensions of this challenge, if it could happen in a place like Littleton.''

Littleton is a suburb of 35,000 southwest of Denver, where farmland is rapidly disappearing beneath suburban sprawl and soccer fields.

Many parents gathered at a nearby elementary school and answered questions from investigators, who were trying to identify some of the victims based only on what they were wearing.

Lauri Senti waited 3-4 hours before she found her 14-year-old daughter, Ashley Steele, safe. Senti stayed at Leawood Elementary until late Tuesday to comfort other grieving parents.

``Everybody was walking around asking if you'd heard about their children," she said. ``You can't really say anything. You're just there for support.''

Since 1997, a series of school shootings around the country have led to demands for stricter laws, tighter security and closer monitoring of troubled students. Two people were killed in an attack in Pearl, Miss., three in West Paducah, Ky., five in Jonesboro, Ark., and two in Springfield, Ore.