

Did prom rejection push killer over the edge?

Scripps Howard News Service
Published: May 3, 1999 12:00 am

LITTLETON, Colo. -- Six days before he killed his classmates, Eric Harris tried to get a date to the prom. But the girl turned him down.

"I hadn't planned on going to the prom. It was late notice," said Brandi Tinklenberg, a junior at Columbine High School. "It was nothing against Eric. He was always really sweet to me." It wasn't the only rejection Harris endured that week. The next day, he was turned down by the Marines because of medical reasons.

In the days after the shooting, Brandi wondered if she somehow helped drive Harris to his dark side.

"I did wonder if I made him more upset about life. But he had it planned for a long, long time," Brandi said. "My friends have made me realize it was nothing I did that made him upset. He was already upset about life."

Brandi said she and Harris were in the same video productions class. Whenever she walked into class, he'd smile and say hello.

On April 14, a girl in the class approached Brandi. "She said Eric was interested in going with me to the prom and 'Are you interested?' I said, 'No, not really.' "

Harris watched from the other side of the room. "It was kind of odd that he had somebody ask me when he was right there. I figured maybe he was too shy or embarrassed."

Brandi said she felt bad after she said no "because I thought he was a nice guy. I was always comfortable around him."

Brandi said she saw Harris in her video productions class two or three more times before the shootings. "When I would walk in, he would turn his head the other way," she said.

The two never spoke again.