

Parents blindsided by plot

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While friends saw the violent fantasies of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold turn into an arsenal of guns and bombs, the teens' parents never suspected their sons were plotting the Columbine High School massacre, according to 10,937 pages of crime records released Tuesday. In the months before the 1999 rampage, one co-worker saw Harris and Klebold explode a "dry ice " bomb during their shift at a Blackjack pizza parlor. A friend watched the teens detonate another bomb in a ditch near Chatfield Reservoir. In his bedroom, Harris also showed the friend two pipe bombs, built with instructions taken from the Internet. But on the day of the killings, in a house rife with gasoline fumes, Wayne Harris told police he had "no reason to believe his son would be involved with such a situation." The father said his son's "interest in explosives and firearms was no more than you would expect from a person looking forward to joining the Marine Corps."

The Klebolds also were blindsided by their son's senseless rage.

"Mr. Klebold said he had no idea what happened or why, and indicated that Dylan was his best friend and that they spent a lot of time together," investigators wrote in an April 30 report. "The Klebolds indicated that Dylan was gentle, and was that way until the day he died."

Yet violent warnings already had been picked up at school. Two months before the worst school shooting in U.S. history, a teacher warned Klebold's parents that their son had written "the most vicious story I have ever read" - an account of a man dressed in black who murdered "all the popular kids."

"It's just a story," Dylan Klebold told creative writing teacher Judith Kelly.

Harris and Klebold killed 12 students and a teacher, while wounding 21 others, before killing themselves in the Columbine library on April 20, 1999. The murders shocked the world and set off national soul-searching about the way America raises its children.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office released the four boxes of documents Tuesday to comply with a court order from a lawsuit filed by two Columbine families. The records included interviews with hundreds of Columbine students and teachers, plus dozens of other associates of Harris and Klebold.

Tom Mauser, father of victim Daniel Mauser, said he was too emotionally drained to wade through the sea of documents released Tuesday. "It's just too much for me right now," he said.

While victim accounts reinforced most publicly reported details of the crime, the newly released records did provide the most extensive look yet at one of the most troubling questions from Columbine: How did two teens from one of America's most comfortable suburbs suddenly turn so bad?

There were no easy answers.

One set of accounts depicted Harris and Klebold as shy but earnest teens, smart enough to score A's in school but crestfallen over attempts to win a simple date with a school girl. Another set described the teens as vicious and unstable. The two maintained apparent "hit lists" of schoolmates to be murdered. And a final video and tape recording described in the

bluntest terms how they planned to destroy the school they so despised, a place where the dominant jock culture reduced them to "the bottom of the food chain." "People will die because of me. It will be a day that will be remembered forever," said Harris in a microcassette found by police in the kitchen of his home.

Wayne Harris framed his son's life with a few positive developments. Eric had been in touch with Marine Corps recruiters, anticipating a new life after graduation. The military ultimately rejected Harris due to his use of the antidepressant Luvox, and some speculated that rejection fueled the shootings.

But the news never was relayed to Harris, according to an interview with his recruiter. Meanwhile, Wayne Harris said, his son looked forward to graduation, had earned two A's, two B's and a C on his last report card, and was "gainfully employed" at Blackjack Pizza. Later, when police began searching the Harris house, they found graduation announcements on the dining room table, and a list of people to whom they would be sent. But they also found a handwritten note, lying on the kitchen table, detailing what appeared to be an "itinerary" for the rampage at the high school.

In Harris' bedroom, police found a shotgun, shells and a bomb. And on a table by his bed, they found what appeared to be a time line for the massacre and the number of people he intended to kill.

Also discovered in the search was the "Anarchist's Cookbook," containing recipes for explosives, and a planning book he called "The Writings of God," including a section called "The Class of '98 That Should Have Died." If Harris' parents couldn't see far beyond the veneer of normalcy, the teen's buddies certainly could.

Nate Dykeman, a close friend of both Harris and Klebold, said he knew the two had been experimenting with explosives for more than a year. In fact, Dykeman said he helped Harris remove and store powder from fireworks in a coffee can.

Dykeman told police he saw several small bombs "sitting out in the open in his bedroom." He added that Harris once took him into the basement and knocked on a hollow area inside a window well - a hiding place, Harris told him, for the bombs he kept hidden because he'd just gotten into a juvenile diversion program to atone for his burglary of a van.

In yet another tour of the Harris home, Eric took Dykeman into his parents' bedroom closet to show him a pipe bomb his father had confiscated. Eric told him his father had put it there because he didn't know what to do with it.

Another friend, Zach Heckler, said Harris told him his father eventually ignited the pipe bomb, because he couldn't disarm or bury it. In earlier court action, Wayne Harris denied that happened.

Dykeman also told authorities he once saw Klebold slip several \$20 bills to Blackjack co-worker Phil Duran, and thought at first that he'd witnessed a drug transaction. But Klebold later told Dykeman that the money had bought a shotgun, and that Duran had earlier sold him a semiautomatic pistol.

The records also offered many examples refuting oft-stated beliefs that Harris' and Klebold's parents were removed from their children.

For example, friends told how parents temporarily removed personal computers from Harris and Klebold after the two were suspended from Columbine for hacking into a school database.

Harris complained to friends that his parents often grounded him for misbehavior. Disturbed by Eric Harris' emotional stability, the Harris family sent their son to a doctor, who prescribed the anti-depressant drug Luvox.

The Klebolds offered a nine-page statement detailing their love and attachment for their son.

In the month before the killings, the Klebolds took a four-day trip with Dylan to pick out a dorm room at the University of Arizona, where Dylan talked of being a computer science major.

The Klebolds had season tickets for Colorado Rockies baseball games, and Dylan often attended with his father. The two also played chess.

Klebold's mother, Susan, said she saw her son cry only once - when he came home from middle school in tears and buried himself beneath stuffed toys on his bed. Although she asked him what was wrong, he never told her.

"Mr. Klebold said that he and his wife were not absentee parents and that they were always there for Dylan," the police interview said. "Mrs. Klebold said that Dylan was tolerant, even-tempered and never talked back."

Still, Tom Klebold told police he noticed that his son's voice had been "tight" four days before the shootings, and made a mental note to speak to him about it. But he never got the chance before April 20.

In Harris' bedroom were the typical trappings of an American teenager: rock star posters, a soccer jersey and a Jenny McCarthy poster. Klebold's room had street signs, a Nine Inch Nails band poster and a photo of a woman in a leopard-skin bikini.

In woods outside the Klebold's expansive home, however, police also found evidence of an explosion, including shotgun wads and a "small electronic device." Inside, they found a box of shotgun shells and a hollow tube that appeared to be a homemade silencer - seemingly out of place under the same roof as Tom Klebold's "anti-violent and anti-gun" sentiments. Friends and co-workers saw powerful hints of the two teens' potential for violence, but they also glimpsed vulnerability as they quavered under the weight of typical teen angst.

Interviews revealed that Harris had tried repeatedly to get a date for the prom, but had been turned down. One woman, a haircutter at a Great Clips salon near Harris' Blackjack Pizza job, said she rejected Harris 10 times. Even attempts by his friends to set him up flopped, and Harris ended up attending only the after-prom party at the school.

Harris' mother, Kathy, told her hairdresser "about Eric's disappointment that he could not find a date for the prom and Kathy related that she felt sorry for Eric."

"Sometimes being a teenager really sucks," Harris told his mother.

His wallet contained names and phone numbers of girls he hadn't talked to for months, but Harris was not without romantic interests. Brenda Parker, a 24-year-old Internet entrepreneur, met Harris at a mall in January of 1998, and began a relationship she describes as a friendship that included sex.

They cruised in her car, he got her free pizza at Blackjack, and he helped with her computer. But Parker said she quit seeing Harris that fall, when she learned he was only 17. In his final days, Harris did take up with a receptionist at the Great Clips salon, but only after asking her friends at Columbine if she liked him. Four days before the killings, Harris invited the teen into his home, and the couple retreated to his bedroom after his parents arrived.

The girl told police "she did not see anything in his room that she considered suspicious." She was paged by her sister to return home, and Harris put his arm around her and kissed her on the cheek only as she left, the girl said.

In his infamous farewell video with Klebold, Harris bade farewell to the girl and said "under different circumstances, it would have been a lot different."

Meanwhile, Klebold agreed to go to the dance with Robyn Anderson - the woman who helped obtain guns used in the rampage - but the arrangement, at least on his part, appeared to be mostly as friends.

Klebold seemed happy at the prom, and even surprised some friends by venturing onto the dance floor with Anderson - an uncharacteristic move that seemed like a favor to his date. Anderson told investigators she did wonder why Harris and Klebold wanted to buy a cache of weapons at a gun show.

"She stated when they purchased the guns she specifically asked them that they weren't going to shoot someone or something," an investigator wrote, "with them replying that they were not that stupid."