

The Columbine Papers: What Their Parents Knew

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The parents of Columbine killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold have often been portrayed as disengaged from the lives of their sons and unaware of the dark paths lying ahead. But 936 pages of evidence taken from the killers' homes and cars were released by the Jefferson County Sheriff's office on Thursday, and a notebook kept by Eric's father, Wayne, details a parent's involvement in his child's downward spiral. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed 12 students and a teacher at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, on April 20, 1999. They then killed themselves in the school library.

The notebook leaves little doubt that the Harrises, at least, were aware of their son's problems and had taken steps to get him help. The papers also further document Eric's now well-known preoccupation with Nazis, Charles Manson and Napalm.

The stenographer's notebook bears the label "Eric." It begins with Wayne Harris making notes about another parent's accusations that Eric has thrown snowballs, damaged a classmate's car, plotted against a friend's house, and was involved with alcohol. The father — or mother, the notebook's handwriting varies — writes, "Talked to Eric. 1. Snowball angry..." There are cryptic references to "Yelling, yanking on car door, being little bully...pushes, yelling."

At one point, the father records that his son would like to talk to an accuser face to face, "with an adult present." There's a notation that the father has called another parent, left a message, and hasn't received a return phone call. The pages of the notebook are filled with comments that seem to have been made during phone calls and conversations, and they reveal snapshots of trouble:

"Eric hasn't broken promise...about leaving each other alone... You told me of past problem with another boy; have you checked with his parents? ... We feel victimized, too.... Manipulative... Con artist."

On a later page, dated 1/29/98, there's reference to "1st degree criminal trespass, Class V felony, 1-3 years. \$1,000-\$100,000," and then "1st offense, juvenile, admitted guilt, willing to do community service & counseling [sic], plead guilty. Necessary to be represented in court?"

Plotting the killings, Eric discusses a preoccupation shared by many teenagers — what to wear: "Sometime in April me and [Klebold] will get revenge and will kick natural selection up a few notches. We will be in all black. Dusters, black army pants...we will have knives and blades and backup weaponry all over our bodies..."

Eric's quotes are contained in pages of school essays and other writings that were confiscated from his home and car. Often, his enhanced sense of grandiosity is unmistakable. "It'll be like the L.A. riots, the Oklahoma bombing, WWII, Vietnam, Duke and Doom all mixed together. I want to leave a lasting impression on the world."

And he writes that if he and Dylan manage to escape from the school after the killing spree, they'll flee to a foreign country from which they couldn't be extradited. "If there isn't such place, then we will hijack a hell of a lot of bombs and crash a plane into NYC with us inside [f]iring away as we go down, just something to cause more devastation [sic]."

The Denver *Post* filed suit to gain access to the papers in 2002. Yesterday, the Harrises and Klebolds said that they would not challenge the sheriff's decision to release the documents. They said they hoped that public access to the evidence would forestall further litigation.