

What the witnesses saw

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April 21 - It was a scene of chaos, pieced together through the shaky voices of teenagers, some splattered with the blood of their friends, some wondering how it was they managed to get out alive, some too upset even to cry.

Bartholomew Foster, 15, a freshman: "I was in the cafeteria ... a teacher ran in and said, "Get down!" After a little while, we saw smoke outside the windows to the student lot ..."

People got up off the floor and ran upstairs. They heard shooting. Foster ran into the first classroom he saw, a science classroom.

"There were about six kids and one teacher in there hiding. The teacher locked the door and put a table up against it."

Foster came in the other door to the classroom, crawling across the floor to stay out of the line of fire. Bullets shot through the window in one of the doors and "wood and glass were flying across the room.

"We were in there for three or four hours ... You could hear a huge explosion, like bombs going off and there was yelling outside the doors of the classroom.

"One of shooter guys was yelling, "I don't give a sh--. They were really close. I wanted to leave. I wanted the SWAT team to come in there. We were cramped in a little corner.

"After about 45 minutes, we started to calm down. We went through the door to next classroom. There were about 20 students in there and we were all talking about how we didn't believe it had happened. Girls were crying and there was a lot of screaming everywhere."

Adam Foss, 18, a senior:

"I was in the choir room and somebody came in and said, "There's a gun!" There were about 60 kids in there. About half left in a panic and half stayed there.

"I stuck my head out the door and I saw a gun barrel. I saw a teacher say 'Get down!' "

"Then I saw the gun shoot, smoke came out of the barrel. A teacher fell into the lockers. I saw the teacher get shot and he was still trying to get the kids out of the hallway.

"As we go out, we see the legs of people and backpacks everywhere. When we walked outside, we stepped over two bodies."

The cafeteria was flooded with water because the sprinklers went off. There were powder marks from guns on the walls, the doors were kicked in.

"We saw one kid lying on the stairs, and one was on the ground. They were just dead, purple, their eyes still open."

Wade Frank, a senior:

He was out in the parking lot standing talking to a friend when he noticed one of the shooters in a black trench coat at the top of stairs. The shooter aimed and shot a girl in the leg. She was lying on a curb and a young man came to her rescue.

"The trench coat walked up and shot the boy point blank in the back."

The guy in the trench coat then walked up a small incline and threw a hand grenade into a parking lot.

"He was just totally calm about everything."

Nick Foss, 18, a senior:

"I've never seen anything like it in my life. I've never seen so many dead people. We walked out of the cafeteria and saw more bodies. One kid had his face blown off. And I saw one of my friends with his face shot off."

Kids were trying to crawl out through the vents. They were looking for a place to hide, a way to get to safety.

He was in the cafeteria with his friends when the shooting started.

Denny Rowe, 15, a sophomore:

He was outside, having lunch with friends.

"These guys opened fire on everything that looked human."

Two gunmen were on top of the stairs at the entrance of the school.

"They were shooting at some kids down below then they pointed at us and started shooting. Bullets were bouncing everywhere. Two guys next to me got hit."

One of the injured was Mike Johnson, 16, a sophomore, who was shot in the leg.

"He was running and screaming."

Araceli Gaucin, 16, junior:

Running through the hallway "I just saw a bunch of people on the ground lying down in pools of blood."

She and her friend Michelle heard gunshots and ran into the kitchen of the cafeteria.

"We were waiting for (the cops) to get them and they never got them."

Melanie Poleschook, a sophomore:

She was in science class on the second floor of the school when she heard gunshots. The students tried to leave but everyone moved them back into the room and for the next three hours she lay on the floor of that classroom watching a wounded business teacher, Mr. (Dave) Sanders.

"He lost a lot of blood ... his pulse was so slow. He was really cold."

Students tried to help him as much as they could, but for the entire three hours, they were afraid he was going to die.

Brian Stepp, 16, sophomore:

He was walking across the soccer field when he heard shots. He turned around.

"One guy was wearing a black trench coat. He turned to a girl that was walking near him and he shot her eight times."

Pat Neville, 15, a sophomore:

He was walking toward his car to go to lunch, when he heard what he thought were firecrackers. Then he saw a guy throw a black thing, possibly a hand grenade or a pipe bomb, on top of the school and it exploded into fire. Another gunman was outside the building, carrying an assault rifle.

"I thought, "Oh my God, it's not a prank."

"I never ran so fast in my life. There was smoke all over the place."

Jennifer Pierce, 17, a junior:

"We all thought it was a joke, but then the teacher came in and said, "Get out now!"

"We ran out of the school, across the street and then we heard gunshots again."

The students ran into neighborhood, knocking on doors, but many of the people in the neighborhood refused to let them in their homes out of fear for their own lives.

Stephen Cohen, 18, a senior:

"I can't even imagine going back there now. I can't even think about it now. I never thought it would happen here because there's so much school spirit and everybody gets along so well."