

Klebold death likely suicide

Autopsy summary released after order

By Charley Able, News Staff Writer
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GOLDEN -- Dylan Klebold, one of the two young gunmen responsible for the 1999 deaths of 12 students and a teacher at Columbine High School, died of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound to the left side of his head.

A summary of his autopsy released Friday by the Jefferson County Coroner's Office states: "The cause of death is due to brain injuries secondary to a close contact, large caliber, through and through gunshot wound involving the left side of the head. This gunshot wound is consistent with self-infliction."

The summary was written by Dr. Ben Galloway, a forensic pathologist.

On Jan. 29, Jefferson County District Judge R. Brooke Jackson ordered the release of the autopsy summaries on 11 victims.

Jackson also had ordered the release of the summary of the Klebold autopsy, but that was delayed after Klebold's family requested a stay because the *Rocky Mountain News* is seeking release of the full report.

Jackson denied the Klebolds' request for a stay Feb. 12.

Autopsy reports for victims Isaiah Shoels and Daniel Rohrbough and gunman Eric Harris were released previously.

Questions about Klebold's death arose after sources close to the investigation indicated Klebold was shot once in the left side of the head, apparently by one of two 9 mm weapons -- either a semiautomatic assault pistol or a rifle.

Some investigators believe that if the right-handed Klebold had shot himself, the wound should have been on the other side, a source said after the shooting.

But Galloway's finding that the wound is consistent with a self-inflicted gunshot was bolstered Friday by Arapahoe County Coroner Dr. Michael Dobersen.

"We do see kind of a predominance of, if you are right-handed, you will hold the gun in that hand. However, there is a significant number of cases where it is the other way around," Dobersen said.

Although Jackson earlier had withheld any portion of the Klebold autopsy, he did reveal that the teenager had no drugs or alcohol in his body when he and Harris carried out their rampage.

Despite Jackson's rejection of the *News'* request for release of the complete Klebold autopsy, the paper will continue its effort.

"The first and foremost reason is that they (the complete autopsy results) are public record subject to disclosure," said attorney Marc Flink, who is pursuing the release on behalf of the *News*.

"Along with that, we think there still is information that can be learned from the full autopsy. It can help people understand what happened on April 20, 1999."

Frank Patterson, the attorney for the Klebolds, said he will continue to oppose full disclosure.

"We will object to any further reconsideration from the trial court," Patterson said.

Former Jefferson County Coroner Nancy Bodelson -- joined by District Attorney Dave Thomas and the families of 12 of the 13 victims -- sought to keep the reports sealed, claiming their release would delay the healing process for the grieving families.