

A boy with many sides

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May 2 - There were the bullets - the slugs he fired into mountain pine trees last fall for fun and all those rounds he gleefully sprayed into dozens of his classmates 12 days ago. No one disputes that.

There were his racist ramblings, the Internet death lists, the bedroom-made bombs he nicknamed "Peltro" and "Pazzie." And there was that seething, secret hunger to "just kill." Those are the facts. That is the profile.

But two weeks before Eric Harris stormed Columbine High School with guns in his hands, bombs in his pockets and payback on his mind, his biggest worry was his seizure-wracked dog. The sick pooch was all he talked about on a recent date, a friend says.

Even as the clock ticked down to his long-planned, self-appointed zero hour, Harris was smiling, rolling strikes and trading happy "high fives" with other teens at their weekly Friday night bowling party. Two weeks later, some of those same kids said he was throwing the high fives with his best friend, Dylan Klebold, as they summarily executed 12 fellow students and one teacher.

At work, Harris could be a cut up, talking in funny voices and telling jokes. At school, he could be an inspired student and writer, hurling his hand in the air to offer his take on Shakespeare. He told girls they looked nice. He escorted friends to class. He gave one teacher a Christmas present. He had a contagious laugh. He talked about building a better future.

"I think he was the greatest actor I've ever known because he never showed me anything, never deviated from the character I knew - a bright, smiling kid," says friend and fellow Columbine student Jennifer LaPlante, 18.

Eric Harris was a killer, certainly cold-blooded, probably deranged. But to simply boil an 18-year-old high school senior down to a soulless, Nazi-loving monster is too easy, too clean. It misses the point: If most kids have two sides, Harris had 10 - some charming, some spiteful, one lethal.

What made him snap? Was it his rejection by the Marine Corps five days before the April 20 massacre? Was it a decision before the shootings to stop taking his anti-psychotic drugs? Was it years of schoolyard taunts? Was it life under the shadow of a successful brother or a decorated military father? Answers to these questions might explain the unexplainable.

But his parents, Wayne and Katherine Harris, have declined repeated interview requests from The Denver Post. They left their home in unincorporated Jefferson County after the shootings, hired an attorney and urged their friends and co-workers to avoid reporters. They also have refused to talk with investigators unless granted immunity.

Interviews with more than two dozen close friends and classmates offer a chilling portrait of an outwardly normal but shy teenager who suddenly careened into a world of hate and violence.

Eric David Harris was born on April 9, 1981, in Wichita, Kan., where his dad was working at the Boeing Military Airplane Co. Wayne Harris already was an officer and a heavily decorated pilot lauded for a cool hand during airborne refueling missions.

In 1983, Wayne and Kathy and their sons, Kevin, then 5, and Eric, moved to Beavercreek, Ohio, where Harris flew for the 4952nd Test Squadron at Wright Air Force Base.

Eric attended first and second grade at Valley Elementary School in Beavercreek and his father continued collecting medals. Harris' flying "skill and leadership" helped in the testing of strategic missile and space systems, Air Force records show. He earned the meritorious service medal, four oak leaf clusters, two bronze service stars and an award for small arms marksmanship.

His youngest boy would aspire to be a military man too, but would also develop a twisted love for combat gore and battlefield violence.

In 1989, Wayne Harris, still flying KC-135 refueling tankers, was transferred to the Wurtsmith Air Force base in Oscoda, Mich., a small city near the shore of Lake Huron. Instead of living on base, he bought a two-story, Cape Cod-style home in a comfortable subdivision next to Cedar Lake.

"I just remember they wanted the children to have a normal, off-base relationship in a normal community," says the Rev. Bill Stone, a pastor who lived across the street. "They were just great neighbors - friendly, outgoing, caring."

Wayne Harris, a Scoutmaster and baseball coach, got elected to the nine-member Lake Shores Property Owners Association. Kathy Harris was a stay-at-home mom. The family lived on a wooded lot on a street where deer often graze in the flower gardens and kids splash around at the neighborhood beach club. After work, Wayne Harris shot baskets with his two boys. Eric Harris attended third and fourth grades at Cedar Lake Elementary School. But their stay ended when Wurtsmith was shut down at the end of 1991 and Wayne Harris was transferred to the air base in Plattsburgh, N.Y.

He served two years with the 380th Operations Support Squadron at the upstate base. While there, Eric Harris attended Stafford Middle School for fifth and sixth grades. As a kid from the base, his friends were a diverse bunch and included some of the same minorities he allegedly would target as a teenager.

"His best friends on the base were ... an Asian and ... a black kid," said 18-year-old Mike Condo, who played Little League baseball with Harris and joined him on a whale-watching trip to Boston around 1993.

Harris is remembered in Plattsburgh as a "normal" 12-year-old, though so timid he struggled to communicate even on the ball field. At the plate, he rarely swung at pitches, preferring to draw walks, a coach says.

"(Eric) was the shyest out of everybody," says Brenden LaPier, a former teammate. "Eric was kind of the total opposite of his brother. I don't really think he wanted to play baseball all that much. It was more of a parent thing."

In the fall of 1993, military cutbacks were about to hit Plattsburgh, so Major Wayne Harris decided to retire after 20 years of service. He moved his family to Littleton, renting a home in the 7000 block of West Elmhurst Avenue.

It's not clear why they chose Colorado, but it ended a lifetime of military moves for Eric Harris. In his two decades in the Air Force, Wayne Harris held 11 different positions at six different bases from Oklahoma to New York. Eric went to five different schools.

Now a civilian, Wayne Harris took a job at Flight Safety in Englewood, where he trained pilots to fly large refueling aircraft. Kathy Harris worked part time at a catering company on West Hampden Avenue.

Kevin Harris enrolled at Columbine as a freshman. Two years later, the older brother would blossom on the football team as a kicker and reserve tight end. Now a 20-year-

old junior and kinesiology major at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Kevin Harris declined to comment.

But his little brother had to make friends all over again in another state. Eric Harris enrolled at Ken Caryl Middle School. One of his classmates was Dylan Klebold.

After school, Harris played kickball in the street with other kids and jumped on the neighbor's trampoline. He also followed the new baseball team in town, the Colorado Rockies.

In 1996, Wayne Harris bought a \$180,000 home on a cul-de-sac overlooking Chatfield Reservoir in the tidy Columbine Knolls subdivision.

Neighborhood kids remember Eric Harris playing street hockey in front of his house. He'd help the family with yardwork on weekends. When he got his driver's license and a 1986 Honda, registered under his father's name, he'd drive slowly and wave to neighbors.

A talent for computers and a love of video games like Doom quickly drew Harris to teenage neighbor Brooks Brown. A fellow freshman, Brown liked Harris' quirky sense of humor and marveled at his keyboard skills.

In just two years, the two friends would temporarily split and their nasty feud would play a role in Eric Harris' unraveling. Yet even in 1996, signs of strangeness already were creeping in.

Harris, still tongue-tied and meek, took fellow freshman Tiffany Typher to the Columbine homecoming dance. He was nervous and quiet, she remembers. Nothing odd - until she broke up with him a few days later and Harris faked his suicide.

"He had his friend take me over to his house. When I went there, he was laying with his head on a rock, and there was fake blood around him, and he was acting like he was dead," Typher says.

Harris grew more confident and outspoken in his sophomore year yet kept to the fringes of the Columbine social circles. He and Brown "were outcasts, kids who didn't fit in," says Randy Brown, Brooks' father. "It is a school of cliques and the athletes are the biggest, toughest group." Harris watched and grew angry as student athletes pushed their way to the head of the lunch line every day. Sometimes he challenged them verbally. Soon he was one of the jocks' favorite punching bags. He was pushed against lockers and called names. like "fag" and "pussy."

Late in his sophomore year, in early 1997, Harris took a \$6.50-an-hour cooking job at Blackjack Pizza in a strip mall near his house. He fretted openly about not having a girlfriend and was "just a lonely kid," a co-worker says.

Klebold also landed a job at the pizza place. Some friends think Harris saw a lot of himself in the painfully shy Dylan.

The two teens quickly became inseparable, friends say. Every school day, Klebold parked his beat-up BMW next to Harris' Honda. Klebold sat in front of Harris in creative writing class and next to him in their video class. Fellow students say Harris often initiated talk between the two about music, computers, or - eventually - his racial dislikes. Klebold simply followed along.

"Eric had a persuasion," says classmate Jeniffer Harmon. "I think Eric would always tell Dylan that people never liked him and he was his only true friend." But there may have been a similar influence on Harris. Another Columbine student working at Blackjack was Chris Morris, 17, a member of the schools' Trench Coat Mafia, a small band of misfits who sometimes wore long, black coats and found refuge as fellow outsiders.

One co-worker says Harris began dressing in darker clothes like Morris, even smoking his brand of cigarettes - Camels. Klebold, Harris and Morris became a tight threesome. By their senior year, they would bowl together on Friday nights at Belleview Lanes. And they shared other tastes.

Co-worker Kristen Kuiken, 17, a junior at Columbine, says she sometimes heard the three boys talking about weaponry and explosives. "They were fascinated with things like that." Morris, 17, could not be reached for comment. He has hired a lawyer who says his client had nothing to do with the Columbine rampage.

Harris and Klebold began hanging out with the Trench Coat Mafia in their junior year. One group member says she never sensed anything dangerous about the pair.

"Eric was like the little Christian kid out of all of us, just a good little kid at school," the girl says. But his association with the group seemed to coincide with troubling changes in Harris' behavior his junior year. In January 1998, he and Klebold were arrested for breaking into a van and stealing \$400 worth of electronic equipment.

Friends now call it a "goof," barely more than a prank. And Harris was outwardly ashamed of the bust, those close to him say. He only talked of the incident in whispers.

He and Klebold were ordered to perform community service work and attend an anger-management seminar. A termination report on Harris later described him as "a very bright young man who is likely to succeed in life." A B-plus student, he often flashed that intellect in classes. His favorite, friends say, was composition class, taught just after the lunch period by Jason Webb.

"Any time Mr. Webb would ask us all questions on Monday, we'd all be slouching down, but Eric would always answer," says classmate LaPlante. "Mr. Webb would ask, 'What's a preposition?' and Eric would know. Or, 'What's the meaning of a reading from Shakespeare?' and Eric would know.

"I just remember him as the kid in the corner with his hand up all the time." Webb declined to comment.

Out in the student parking lot, Harris would sit on the trunk of his car at lunch time and joke with Klebold or other friends. When LaPlante walked by, he would playfully throw french fries at her.

But inside Columbine's hallways or in the cafeteria, Harris and the other trench-coaters were harassed by jocks, friends say.

"Everywhere they went, they were taunted and teased about how they dressed ... ," says Typher, the girl Harris went out with briefly his freshman year. "You could tell he'd get upset by it.

"What might have driven him to do this might have been the way the jocks treated him. If you're called a psycho all your life, you're going to live out that reputation." Adds longtime friend Brown: "People hated him. He felt it probably more than others because he was a really intelligent kid. They'd throw cigarettes at us out of cars as we walked past." What perhaps added fuel to the abuse, Brown says, was that Harris was outspoken about how he dressed and who he hung out with. No peer pressure was going to force him to change.

Harris grew more unhappy and distant at school, friends say. But at the Friday night bowling parties, he would relax and come alive. "Rock 'N Bowl," as it's called, was his social life. At Belleview Lanes, 16 students would crowd together on four lanes to bowl and smoke cigarettes.

They kept score on the electronic monitors overhead and the team of Harris, Klebold and Morris often won. Harris' style was odd: he would pick the lightest ball in the place, an eight-pounder, then heave it from his chest down the alley. It was loud but he got strikes.

Back at school on Mondays, though, the teasing would continue. Beginning late in his junior year, Harris began plowing some of his anger into the Internet.

In writings on his Web page - a compilation believed to have been launched sometime in late 1997 - Harris seemed to be opening his dark side to the cyber world. The predominant emotion was rage.

At the same time, he threw himself into violent video games, becoming an expert at the games Doom and Duke Nukem, where players use guns to kill as many creatures as possible. His musical tastes fell into the realm of industrial, German techno and shock bands that spewed hate rhetoric.

Boyhood pranks, like wrapping a neighbor's trees in toilet paper or lighting firecrackers on a doorstep, became military-like "missions" and included shooting BB guns at houses.

According to "mission logs" posted by Harris on his Web page, he and "VoDKa," a nickname for Dylan Klebold would vandalize the neighborhood, lighting firecrackers, exploding batteries and stealing road signs. One road sign was still hanging in Harris' garage when investigators searched his home.

"We are more of a gang. We plan out and execute missions," Harris wrote. "Anyone pisses us off, we do a little deed to their house. We have many enemies in our school, therefore, we make many missions." Under a file on his Web site called "pissed," Harris' growing anger flares further.

"I will rig up explosives all over a town and detonate each one of them at will after I mow down a whole f---ing area full of you snotty a-- rich mother f---ing high strung godlike attitude having worthless piece of s--- whores," he wrote at age 17. "I don't care if I live or die in the shootout. All I want to do is kill and injure as many of you p---- as I can, especially a few people, like Brooks Brown."

After a bush was burned and the doorknobs glued at one neighborhood house, Harris blamed Brown. But Brown had been grounded at the time and his mother, Judy, told police it was Harris who pulled the prank. Authorities told Wayne and Kathy Harris to watch their son.

Eric Harris later apologized to the Browns, though they say it seemed utterly insincere. Meanwhile, Harris fumed. On his Web page, he began threatening Brooks Brown. The Brown family were tipped off about Harris' rantings and made printouts of his Internet writings.

The tipster? Dylan Klebold, who as a little boy played with Brooks Brown in a muddy ditch at the end of their street. He was risking a lot by warning an old pal, friends say now.

The Browns gave copies of Harris' Web pages to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department. That was a year before the Columbine rampage. No action was taken. But on Friday, officials said the Browns had refused to let their son's name be used in the investigation, and they also had declined to file a formal complaint that would have allowed detectives to question Harris. In April 1998, days after the Browns gave those printouts to the sheriff's department, authorities say Harris began keeping a handwritten diary with explicit plans for destroying his high school on April 20, 1999, the anniversary of Adolf Hitler's birthday. He drew diagrams of the building and made notes about the lighting in hallways and wrote that at 11 a.m. the largest number of students would be in the cafeteria.

That's where investigators would find the biggest of 51 bombs assembled by Harris and Klebold - a 20-pound device fueled by a propane tank. It never went off.

Other "mission logs" written by Harris and later recovered by authorities describe the progress of Harris and Klebold's bomb-building efforts during their junior year. One entry designates names like "Peltro" and "Pazzie" for several bombs "created entirely by scratch by" Harris and Klebold.

His computer talents also landed Harris a girlfriend. Through an on-line chat last summer, he met a local teenager and began dating her around July or August. He even took her to a Columbine dance during the fall semester, friends say.

But a fresh school year didn't seem to buoy Harris' spirits at school. The taunting continued. He seemed more depressed than ever to some.

Sources have confirmed that Harris was taking the prescription drug Luvox, often used to treat obsessive-compulsive disorder and depression. Patients are told that combining Luvox with alcohol could cause extreme agitation. Harris was known to drink Jack Daniels whiskey.

"No, I am not crazy, crazy is just a word, to me it has no meaning," Harris wrote on his Web page in March 1998.

None of Harris' friends say they knew he'd been diagnosed with a mental illness.

It could explain, however, why during his senior year Harris seemed to fall deeper into dark infatuations with guns and racist views, other students say.

Harris began wearing hats and shirts with German slogans. At "Rock 'N Bowl" he and Klebold sometimes traded "Sig Heils" after rolling strikes.

In his morning video class, he and Klebold made four videos during the fall semester. In one, the boys pretend to attack a house with toy guns, searching the rooms and firing at empty beds. In another, they were taped while in the mountains, shooting real guns - possibly the ones used in the Columbine rampage - at pine trees, cans and other targets.

"Nobody really paid attention to it because it was pretty much normal for these guys. They were so obsessed with military stuff," says Columbine student Jon Ungerland, who sat next to Harris and Klebold in the video class.

"I could hear their conversations. Eric would be the main one talking and Dylan would follow along," Ungerland says. "Eric would say, 'You know, I wish we could kill all the n-----.' They were extremely racist."

But by this spring, close friends say Harris was outwardly trying to soften his edges. He even made up with his old pal Brown, who he would later warn to "get out of here" as Harris walked into Columbine that Tuesday morning.

"(The jocks) just wouldn't let him change," Brown says. "That's what really sucks about this. He became a really nice guy. A friend went on a date with him two weeks ago and all Eric talked about was how his dog was having seizures."

It's not clear how badly Harris wanted to follow his father's footsteps into the military - or whether his dad was pushing him to enlist. But unknown to most friends, Harris was trying to get into the Marine Corps.

Just five days before the attack, however, the Marines rejected Harris' application because he was taking medication and had lied about it in an earlier screening interview. He never talked to friends about going to college despite taking college-level courses.

Some friends of Harris told The New York Times they believed he might have tried to go off the anti-psychotic drug, maybe after that Marine rejection. Two nights later, on April 17, Klebold took a friend, Robyn Anderson, to the prom. Harris didn't have a date but showed up at the after-prom party in the high school's cafeteria. He played casino games with other members of the Trench Coat Mafia. He got angry.

"He was at the game where you throw baseballs at milk bottles and Eric picked up all three balls at once and threw them. He was getting really violent, shouting and stuff,"

Ungerland recalls. "The game coordinator told him to calm down. Eric got mad and walked away."

On Tuesday morning, the day he had been planning for at least a year, Harris and Klebold showed up for their 6:30 a.m. bowling class at Belleview Lanes, a friend says. At 11 a.m., they drove to school and parked in their assigned spaces.

They unloaded two black duffel bags filled with guns and bombs from their trunks, walked over a small hill outside Columbine and started shooting kids. Four hours later, Harris and Klebold were found dead from self-inflicted gunshot wounds in the school library. Around them lay the bullet-riddled bodies of eight young men and women. Five more bodies lay in other spots inside and outside the school.

"Two weekends ago, before all this started, he was talking about his future," Kuiken recalls. "I had quit (Blackjack Pizza) and we he was like, 'Yeah, once I graduate I think I'm gonna quit too. But not now.'..."

" 'When I graduate I'm going to get a job that's better for my future.' "

Patricia Callahan, Mark Obmascik and Kevin Simpson and Theo Stein contributed to this report.