

# *Columbine Killers, on Tape, Thanked 2 for Gun*

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In the weeks before the massacre at Columbine High School, the two teenage killers made a videotape in which they chillingly described the act they were about to commit and assured future viewers that they were acting alone and that no one knew what they were planning.

The teenagers, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, thanked two local men for helping them obtain a weapon they would use when they burst into the school on April 20 and killed 13 people before killing themselves.

Trying to ensure that none of his or Mr. Harris's friends or family members would be charged in the shootings, Mr. Klebold, looking directly into the camera, said: "Let me tell you this much, they have no clue. So don't blame them and arrest them for what we did."

The remarks by Mr. Klebold and others by Mr. Harris were revealed today during an emotional hearing in a district court here, where Mark E. Manes, 22, a computer systems manager, was sentenced to six years in prison for selling one of the guns used at Columbine to Mr. Klebold. The sentencing guidelines could have allowed the judge, Henry Nieto, to impose a prison term three times as long.

The videotape was not shown at the hearing.

Three months ago, Mr. Manes pleaded guilty to two felony charges, selling a handgun to a juvenile and possessing a dangerous weapon. The judge imposed a sentence of six years for the first charge and three for the second but ordered that they be served concurrently.

In arguing for a maximum penalty, Steven L. Jensen, the Jefferson County prosecutor, tried to convey to the judge that absent Mr. Manes's relationship with the killers, the tragedy might not have occurred.

As his only witness, the lead detective in the case, Kate Battan, recounted the chronology of how the killers, who were 17 at the time, met Mr. Manes at a weekend gun show in January and how he bought for Mr. Klebold a Tec-9 semiautomatic handgun for \$500 and later -- the day before the killings -- 100 rounds of ammunition.

Largely through information she obtained from an interview with Mr. Manes, she described the transaction and three trips he and the killers made to a target-practice

range. On one occasion, she said, Mr. Harris exploded ammunition into the trunk of a tree, destroying it, and said, "Imagine that in someone's [expletive] brain."

She also quoted the killers from a videotape that the authorities found in one of the killer's homes days after the massacre. It was apparently made sometime between Mr. Klebold's purchase of the Tec-9 and the day of the shootings.

By Ms. Battan's account, the tape was something of a suicide note in that the two clearly left the impression they would die in carrying out their deadly mission.

But as a critical component of the taped message, Mr. Harris and Mr. Klebold assertively thanked Mr. Manes and another man, Philip Duran, for helping them obtain the Tec-9.

"Oh, I'd like to thank you, Mark and Phil," Ms. Battan said Mr. Klebold said on the videotape.

And as if to exonerate them from any culpability in the shootings, Mr. Harris said on the tape, according to Ms. Battan, "Yeah, you know it's not their fault."

And Mr. Klebold asserted that if Mr. Manes and Mr. Duran had not helped him and Mr. Harris obtain a weapon, "We would have found someone else."

Mr. Duran, who worked at Black Jack Pizza with Mr. Harris and Mr. Klebold, was with Mr. Manes when the deal for the handgun was made; he also accompanied them all three times to the shooting range.

He is scheduled to be arraigned in 10 days on the same charges that Mr. Manes faced.

Led through questions by Mr. Jensen, Ms. Battan also told the court how the killers wanted to make it clear that they had hidden their plans from all their friends and members of their families. As if speaking from the grave, knowing they would die in the slaughter, they implored the authorities they need not seek out Mr. Manes, Mr. Duran or anyone else for involvement in the shootings to come.

"Don't blame them or arrest them for what we did," Mr. Klebold said on the videotape, according to Ms. Battan. "Our friends and family, no one had a clue."

In explaining his sentencing decision, Judge Nieto appeared to be balancing the interests of the victims and Mr. Manes, saying, "I don't believe anything we do here today will comfort the victims."

But referring to the charge of selling a weapon to a juvenile, he added, "This crime demonstrates the maximum harm that can occur from a violation of this statute."

Mr. Manes was not charged with knowing what Mr. Harris and Mr. Klebold intended to do.

Mr. Manes spent most of the three-hour hearing seated at the defense table with his head down.

Before Judge Nieto imposed his sentence, Mr. Manes stood and faced him and said, emphatically, he had no idea what Mr. Harris and Mr. Klebold were planning when they bought the gun and practiced shooting it.

"I was horrified," he said.

He added: "There is no way I can adequately express my sorrow to the families of the victims of Columbine. It is something I will regret the rest of my life."

The sentencing followed more than an hour of wrenching testimony by family members of nine of the victims in the shootings, many of whom characterized Mr. Manes as no less guilty of the killings than Mr. Harris and Mr. Klebold, and all of whom asked Judge Nieto to impose the longest sentence possible.

Several cried as they spoke; two families used stirring musical videotaped presentations of their children who were killed to emphasize the depth of their loss.

In addressing the court, Kristen Townsend, whose sister Lauren Townsend was gunned down, spoke with tears in her eyes and said: "I want a full sentence not to seek revenge but to keep some dignity for my sister's life and her death."

Some relatives used the opportunity to ask Judge Nieto to send a message that would discourage future illegal acts.

"The court should impose a sentence which will send a message of deterrence to others who might consider providing dangerous weapons to youngsters in violation of the law," said Betty Cook, the aunt of another victim, Isaiah Shoels, reading a statement from the boy's parents, Michael and Vonda.

"If we had our way, the defendant would never be allowed on the streets again. Life is too precious for anyone to contribute in any manner to the death of another."

One parent, Thomas Mauser, whose son, Daniel, was killed, said: "I ask you clearly to make a statement that this will deter other crimes."

"Some would say I am scapegoating Mr. Manes for a terrible crime. But no. I've had to think about that a lot. It is clear to me what his role is, and his sentence should reflect what that was."