

FOIA MARKER

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OA/ID Number: 19942

FolderID:

Folder Title:

Jonesboro, Ark. Shooting Radio Address 3/28/98

Stack:

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Row:

91

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SCHOOL VIOLENCE radio address 3/28/98

Reference :- Paducah, ^{PA} Pearl, Miss.

- Accomplishments?
- Riley/Reid Rept ~~of~~ on school safety — safe but much remains to be done — communities
- Guns? (~~zero~~ zero tolerance)
- The question why: never know why, or cite many were victims of abuse or neglect?

RAHM

- Read names
- These ~~people~~ ^{are the} names etched into public/collective memory
lives + potential lost
- Repeat
We may never understand — days, months, ... trying to make sense of the senseless
- Stay away from policy — stay into moral

— This is the 3rd time in recent mos. that our nation has been shaken...

5TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 The Dallas Morning News
THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

March 29, 1998, Sunday, STATE EDITION

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 34A

LENGTH: 326 words

HEADLINE: Clinton says U.S. must try to learn why;
Radio speech addresses Arkansas killings, others

BYLINE: Kathy Lewis, Washington Bureau of The Dallas Morning News

DATELINE: JOHANNESBURG, South Africa

BODY:

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa - President Clinton said Saturday the nation may never be able to make sense out of the senseless, but it must try to discover what prompts a youngster to kill another.

"This is the third time in recent months that a quiet town - and our nation - have been shaken by the awful specter of students being killed by other young people at schools," Mr. Clinton said.

From Africa, Mr. Clinton devoted his Saturday radio address to mourning the loss of four students and a teacher fatally shot Tuesday outside Westside Middle School near Jonesboro, Ark. Two boys are being held in the killings.

He named each of the five victims, then the three young people killed in a school shooting in Paducah, Ky., and two in Pearl, Miss., in recent months.

"Three towns: Jonesboro, Pearl, Paducah - too many precious lives lost," he said.

Mr. Clinton told how storefronts in Jonesboro display signs reading "our hearts" are with Westside Middle School. "Even though Hillary and I are far away from our home state, our hearts, too, are with Westside, and with the grieving."

Mr. Clinton has asked Attorney General Janet Reno to convene a panel of experts to analyze the three incidents, see what they have in common, and determine whether preventative steps could be taken.

"We do not understand what drives children, whether in small towns or big cities, to pick up guns and take the lives of others," Mr. Clinton said. "We may never make sense of the senseless, but we have to try."

Protecting children from school violence is more than a matter of law and policy, he said.

"At heart, it's a matter of basic values, of conscience and community. We must teach our children to respect others. We must instill in them a deep, abiding sense of right and wrong," he said.

"And to children who are troubled, angry or alone, we must extend a hand before they destroy the lives of others and destroy their own in the process."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

NOTES: A shorter version of this story appeared on p. 36A in the Home Final edition.

LOAD-DATE: March 30, 1998

2ND STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 Little Rock Newspapers, Inc.
The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

March 29, 1998, Sunday

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. A16

LENGTH: 602 words

HEADLINE: Text of President Clinton's speech

BODY:

Text of President Clinton's radio address Saturday:

In the storefronts and shop windows of Jonesboro, Ark., there are signs that read, "Our hearts are with Westside Middle School." Even though Hillary and I are far away from our home state, our hearts, too, are with Westside and with the grieving families whose loved ones were killed or injured in that tragic incident just four days ago.

This is the third time in recent months that a quiet town and our nation have been shaken by the awful specter of students being killed by other young people at schools. We join the families of Jonesboro and all America in mourning this terrible loss of young life -- life so full of promise and hope so cruelly cut short. We mourn the loss of Natalie Brooks, of Paige Ann Herring, of Stephanie Johnson, of Britthney Varner, and of a heroic teacher, Shannon Wright, who sacrificed her own life to save a child. These five names will be etched in our memories forever, and linked forever, with the names of Nicole Hadley, Jessica James and Casey Steger of Paducah, Ky.; and Lydia Kaye Dew and Christina Mennefee of Pearl, Miss. Our thoughts and our prayers are with all their families today.

We do not understand what drives children, whether in small towns or big cities, to pick up guns and take the lives of others. We may never make sense of the senseless, but we have to try. We have seen a community come together in grief and compassion for one another, and in the determination that terrible acts like these must no longer threaten our nation's children.

Parents across America should welcome the news, reported just this month by Attorney General Reno and Education Secretary Riley, that the vast majority of our schools are safe and free of violent crime. We've worked hard to make our schools places of learning, not fear; places where children can worry about math and science, not guns, drugs and gangs. But when a terrible tragedy like this occurs, it reminds us there is work yet to be done. I have directed Attorney General Reno to bring together experts on school violence to analyze these incidents, to determine what they have in common, and whether there are further steps we can take to reduce the likelihood of something so terrible recurring. Already we've seen the remarkable difference community policing has made in our nation's streets. Now we have to apply that same energy and resolve to our schools to make them safer places for children to learn, play and grow. At school there must be full compliance with our policy of zero tolerance toward guns. And at home, there should be no easy access to weapons that kill. Protecting our children from school violence is more than a matter of law or policy. At heart, it is a matter of basic values, of conscience and community. We must teach our children to respect others. We must instill in them a deep, abiding sense of right and wrong. And to children who are troubled, angry or alone, we must extend a hand before they destroy the lives of others and destroy their own in the process. We have to understand that young children may not fully appreciate the consequences of actions that are destructive but may be

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, March 29, 1998, Sunday

able to be romanticized at a twisted moment, and we have to make sure that they don't fall into that trap.

Three towns -- Jonesboro, Pearl, Paducah -- too many precious lives lost. The white ribbons that flutter today in my home state of Arkansas are a poignant and powerful challenge to all of us, a challenge to come together for the sake of our children and for the future of our nation.

Thanks for listening.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: April 1, 1998

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
RADIO ADDRESS ON INCIDENT IN JONESBORO, ARKANSAS
CAPETOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
March 28, 1998

In the storefronts and shop windows of Jonesboro, Arkansas, there are signs that read, "Our Hearts Are with Westside Middle School." And even though Hillary and I are far away from our home state, our hearts, too, are with Westside--and with the grieving families whose loved ones were killed or injured in that tragic incident just four days ago.

This is the third time in recent months that a quiet town--and our nation--have been shaken by school violence. We join the families of Jonesboro, and all of America, in mourning this terrible loss of young life--life once so full of promise and hope, and now so cruelly cut short. We mourn the loss of Natalie Brooks. Of Paige Ann Herring. Of Stephanie Johnson. Of Brittany Varner. And of a heroic teacher, Shannon Wright, who sacrificed her own life to save a child. These five names will be forever etched in our memory, and forever linked with the names of Nicole Hadley, Jessica James, and Kayce Steger of Paducah, Kentucky; and Lyndia Kaye Dew and Christina Menefee of Pearl, Mississippi. Our thoughts, and our prayers, are with each of them and their families today.

We do not understand what drives children--whether in small towns or big cities--to pick up guns and take the lives of others. We will struggle for weeks and months and may never make sense of the senseless. Only time, and timeless faith, can ease the suffering. But even in these few days, we have seen a community come together in grief, in compassion for one another, and in the determination that terrible acts like these must no longer threaten our nation's children.

Parents across America should welcome the news, reported just this month by Attorney General Reno and Education Secretary Riley, that the vast majority of our schools are safe, and free of violent crime. We have worked hard to make our schools places of learning, not of fear. Places where our children can worry about math and science, not guns and drugs. But when a terrible tragedy like this occurs, it reminds us there is work yet to be done.

And there is more we can do to confront the challenge posed by school violence. We have seen the remarkable difference community policing has made in our nation's streets. Now we must apply that same energy and resolve to our nation's schools, to make them safer places for kids to learn and play and grow. At school, there must be full compliance with our policy of zero tolerance toward guns. And at home, there should be no easy access to weapons that kill. I have directed Attorney General Reno to bring together experts on school violence to analyze these incidents. Once we understand the similarities, we will better understand how to prevent

future attacks.

But protecting our children from school violence is more than a matter of law or policy. At heart, it is a matter of basic values--of conscience and community. We must teach our children to respect others. We must instill in them a deep, abiding sense of right and wrong. And to children who are troubled, angry, or alone, we must extend a hand--before they destroy the lives of others, and destroy their own in the process.

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This is the third time in recent months that a quiet town--and ^{our} nation--have been shaken by school violence. We join the families of Jonesboro, and all of America, in mourning this terrible loss of young life--life once so full of promise and hope, and now so cruelly *cut short*. ~~extinguished~~ We mourn the loss of Natalie Brooks. Of Paige Ann Herring. Of Stephanie Johnson. Of Brittany Varner. And of a heroic teacher, Shannon Wright, who sacrificed her own life to save a child. These five names will be forever etched in our memory, and forever linked with the names of Nicole Hadley, Jessica James, and Kayce Steger of West Paducah, Kentucky; and Lyndia Kaye Dew and Christina Menefee of Pearl, Mississippi. Our thoughts, and our prayers, are with each of them and their families today.

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Three towns--Jonesboro, Pearl, and West Paducah--and too many precious lives lost. The white ribbons that flutter today in my home state are a poignant and powerful challenge--a challenge to come together for the sake of our children, and for the future of our nation.

Draft 03/26/98 11:00am

Palmer
Paul
Podesta
Lewitz

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
RADIO ADDRESS ON INCIDENT IN JONESBORO, ARKANSAS
CAPETOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
March 28, 1998

Comments
4:00

In the storefronts and shop windows of Jonesboro, Arkansas, there are signs that read, "Our Hearts Are with Westside Middle School." And even though Hillary and I are far away from our home state, our hearts, too, are with Westside--and with the grieving families whose loved ones were killed or injured in that tragic incident just four days ago.

This is the third time in recent months that a quiet town--and a nation--have been shaken by similar violence. We join the families of Jonesboro, and all of America, in mourning this terrible loss of young life--life once so full of promise and hope, and now so cruelly extinguished. We mourn the loss of Natalie Brooks. Of Paige Ann Herring. Of Stephanie Johnson. Of Brittany Varner. And of a selfless, heroic teacher, Shannon Wright, who sacrificed her own life to save a child. These five names--~~five souls~~--will be forever etched in our memory, and forever linked to the names of Nicole Hadley, Jessica James, and Kayce Steger of West Paducah, Kentucky; and Lyndia Kaye Dew and Christina Menefee of Pearl, Mississippi. Our thoughts, and our prayers, are with each of them and their families today.

We do not understand what drives children to pick up guns and take the lives of others. We will struggle for weeks and months and years and may never understand. ~~Benny Baker, a minister who does volunteer work at Westside, has said, "there are not any words" that can ease the suffering.~~ Only time, and timeless faith, can ~~do that~~. But even in these few days, we have seen a community come together in grief, in compassion for one another, and in the determination that terrible acts like these must no longer threaten our nation's children.

Calming → Our schools should be places of learning, not of fear. We have worked hard to make that happen--to let our children worry about math and science, not guns and drugs. This month, Attorney General Reno and Education Secretary Riley reported that the majority of our schools are safe, free of violent crime. And that is news which every parent will welcome. But the report--and the terrible tragedy in Jonesboro--tell us that more needs to be done.

We have seen the remarkable difference community policing has made in our nation's streets. We must apply that same energy and resolve to our nation's schools. I have directed Attorney General Reno to convene experts on school violence who can analyze these incidents. Once we identify any similarities, we will better understand how to prevent future attacks.

↓
But ultimately, matter not only of law, but of heart--
the community.
Return more quickly to ecology

But when a terrible act like this happens,

our children basic values--a respect for others and a deep, abiding sense of right and wrong. And to those who are troubled, angry, or alone, we must extend a hand--before they destroy the lives of others, and their own in the process.

Three towns--Jonesboro, Pearl, and West Paducah--and too many precious lives lost. The white ribbons that flutter today in my home state are a poignant and powerful reminder of the challenges ^{to us} ~~we face~~--challenges we must overcome for the sake of our children, and for the future of our nation.

↓
come together for sake of our children



SUNTUM_M @ A1
03/25/98 06:54:00 AM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: 1998-3-25 remarks by President on Jonesboro incident

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Kampala, Uganda)

For Immediate Release

March 25, 1998

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
UPON DEPARTURE

Entebbe Airport
Entebbe, Uganda

11:05 A.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Just before I left the hotel this morning, I talked to the Governor of Arkansas and extended my personal condolences and sorrow about the terrible incident in Jonesboro yesterday. I attempted to call the mayor, who is an old friend of mine, but I haven't reached him yet.

I just want to say again how profoundly sad I am and how disturbed I am. I've been thinking about this for the last several hours. This is the third incident in the last few months involving young children and violence in schools, and I'm going to ask the Attorney General to find whatever experts there are in our country on this and try to analyze this terrible tragedy to see whether there are any common elements in this incident and the other two, and whether it indicates any further action on our part.) ?

Today the people in my home state and a town I know very well are grieving. They're suffering losses. And we should focus on that. But I do think in the weeks to come we have to analyze these incidents and see whether or not we can learn anything that will tell us what we can do to prevent further ones.

Q Do you have any thoughts about how to stop this? I mean, if you've been thinking about it, anything come to mind, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't want to say too much until we have a chance to analyze them. I don't know enough about the facts of this incident. The facts of this incident are just now coming out. I've read, obviously, all the latest wire reports I can get, and frankly I'm not sure I know enough about the other two to draw any conclusions.

I don't want the American people to jump to any conclusions, but when three horrible tragedies like this involving young people who take other people's lives and then in the process destroy their own, we have to see if there are some common elements. And we'll look and do our best to do the right thing.

Q Do you suspect that there are some common elements, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the circumstances certainly seem to have a lot in common. What we need to know is what's behind the circumstances. As I said, I think that the American people today should send their thoughts, their prayers, their hopes to the people in Jonesboro. But in the weeks ahead we need

to look into this very closely and see what, if anything, we can find. And then if we do find some patterns, we ought to take whatever action seems appropriate.

Q Your trip to Rwanda, could you give us just a little advance word of what you hope to accomplish there, sir?

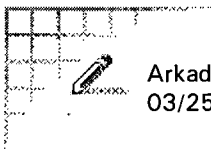
THE PRESIDENT: Obviously, I hope that my trip there will help to avoid further killing along the ethnic lines, and bring the attention of the world to this in a way that will have an impact on ethnic conflicts in other parts of the world. And then I'm going to come back here to the regional meeting that President Museveni has agreed to host, and I hope we'll come out with a statement there that will allow us to make further progress.

Thank you.

END

11:08 A.M. (L)

Message Sent To: _____



Arkadi M. Gerney
03/25/98 12:56:17 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Jeffrey A. Shesol/WHO/EOP

cc:

Subject: Jonesboro Stuff

I don't have that much for you yet, most of the news I seen deals with the facts of the shooting, not community response. Let me know if I can get you anything else, when you know more.

A. Community Break Down

1) Television/ V-Chip Solutions. Empowering parents to control the intake of violence that seems to desensitize young children.

- "'Clearly the biggest message from movies and TV is that violence is an acceptable solution to complex problems,' says Vic Strasburger, professor of pediatrics at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine." (USA Today 3/25, 3A)

B. Community Pulling Together

2) - Jonesboro Sun, 3/25:

Westside School Superintendent Grover Cooper said there will be no school in the 1,400-student district today, and he and the staff will meet to determine when school will resume. "It's terrible," a shocked Cooper said. "There's just no way to describe it." Cooper has worked in public education for 44 years and is set to retire at the end of this school year. He called the shootings "something that you never" believe can happen in a small, primarily rural Arkansas school district.

Rev. Jerry Jolly, Arkansas State Police chaplain who was just one of a number of ministers, counselors and others who responded to the school Tuesday afternoon and at a session Tuesday night, called the shootings "something you expect to hear about out of New York." Jolly said his efforts and those of others may not have helped much. "Telling the kids they (the suspects) had been apprehended did more to calm the kids than anything we did." Benny Baker, a Church of Christ minister who does volunteer work at the school, said "there are not any words" to ease the suffering.

...

Dr. Robert Beaton, the medical director of St. Bernard's Regional Medical Center's emergency department, was in charge of dealing with the physical wounds of victims.

...

In regard to the emotional wounds, Beaton said, Jonesboro is "a close-knit community" and the mass shooting "will leave a scar that will take a long time to heal." The healing will be particularly difficult, Beaton said, when the one-year anniversary of the tragedy arrives next March 24. But Beaton believes "this community will pull together, will come through it."

2) "Many fast-food restaurants in town quickly changed their signs to read 'OUR HEARTS ARE WITH WESTSIDE'." (Washington Post 3/25, A12)

C. School Violence Background (from 1994 SOTU Memo, so stats are not the most recent.)

School Violence

Schools Need Protection

- * 160,000 schoolkids stay home each day for fear of their lives. (USA Today 9/16/93)
- * The Joyce Foundation poll ...found that only 21% of students feel they are safe from violence in the schools and only 30% feel they are safe travelling to and from school. (Kids and Guns, The Educational Fund to End Handgun Violence 1993)
- * In 1989, an estimated 430,000 students took a weapon to school to protect themselves from attack or harm at least once in a sixmonth period.(Joycelyn Elders Federal News Service 11/1/93)
- * In suburban Jefferson Parish, La., where 21 percent of high schoolers say they carried a gun in the past year., 73 percent said they did so for protection.(U.S. News and W.R. 11/8/93)
- * Sixteen percent of eighth graders, 14 percent of 10th graders and 12 percent of 12th graders told University of Michigan researchers that they feared for their safety. (U.S. News and W.R. 11/8/93)
- * At least 45 urban systems now screen students with metal detectors. Even elementary schools are using them.(U.S. News and W.R. 11/8/93)

Crimes at School

- * Today more than 3 million crimes a year are committed in or near the 85,000 U.S. public schools...(U.S. News and W.R. 11/8/93)
- * In the 1992-1993 school year, 33 persons (students, faculty, and teachers) were killed on the way to school or on school property.(National School Safety Center and the Center on Handgun Control. This is an estimate because there are no national records.)
- * From September 1986 to September 1990 at least 71 people -- 65 students and 6 school employees -- had been killed with guns at school; another 201 were severely wounded; and 242 individuals were held hostage at gunpoint.(CQ Researcher 9/11/92)
- * Nearly 300,000 high school students are physically attacked each month. (Ad Hoc Committee on Violence, Rev. William Moore)
- * Shootings or hostage situations in school had occurred in at least 35 states and the District of Columbia from September 1986 to September 1990.(CQ Researcher 9/11/92)
- * 45% of the students in the Justice Department survey said they had been threatened with a gun or had been shot at on the way to or from school during the previous few years. (Washington Times 12/13/93)

* Approximately 100 teachers have been assaulted annually by students in the past four school years.(CQ Researcher 9/11/92)

* Last year there were 2,643 assaults, 403 robberies and 2,444 incidents of weapons possession reported in the city(New York) schools, an increase from the previous year in each category.(NY Times 11/23/93)

* There were 5,761 violent incidents in New York City schools last year, up 16 percent from a year earlier.

* Researchers at Cincinnati's Xavier University interviewed principals in 1,216 school systems last year. Sixty-four percent of urban principals said violence has increased on their schools in the past five years; so did 54 percent of suburban principals and 43 percent of those in rural areas.

Guns at School

* One in five high school students now carries a firearm, knife, or club to school.
(Cong Rec 9/15/93 Mr. Dodd)

* ...rural students are twice as likely to carry a gun to school than the national average.
(Kids and Guns, The Educational Fund to End Handgun Violence 1993)

* In heavily suburban Los Angeles, 405 guns were confiscated in schools in 1992, 28 of them in elementary schools.(CQ Researcher 9/3/93)

* [APA study] students carry about 270,000 guns to school daily.(Jet 9/20/93)

* ...an estimated 270,000 guns go to school every day.(U.S. News and W.R. 11/8/93)

* According to one survey, 135,000 students in this nation of ours bring a weapon, a gun, a handgun to school every single day.(Cong Rec 10/21/93 Sen from RI)

* ...100,000 students bring handguns to school every day in the United States.(Cong Rec 9/21/93.Mr. Glickman)

* A University of Michigan study reports that 9 percent of eighth graders carry a gun, knife or club to school at least once a month.(U.S. News and W.R. 11/8/93)

* Twenty percent of the suburban high schoolers surveyed by Tulane researchers Joseph Sheley and M. Dwayne Smith endorsed shooting someone "who has stolen something from you."(U.S. News and W.R.

5 Are Killed at School; Boys, 11 and 13, Are Held

By RICK BRAGG

JONESBORO, Ark., March 24 — A 13-year-old boy, who reportedly vowed to kill all the girls who had broken up with him, and his 11-year-old cousin opened fire on students outside a middle school here this afternoon, killing four girls and a teacher and wounding 11 other people, the authorities said.

Law-enforcement officers said the two boys, dressed in camouflage clothing, apparently lay in wait in a wooded area near the school after someone, perhaps a third person, set off a fire alarm, forcing students and faculty members outside.

Dazed students described how dozens of seventh- and eighth-grade students filed out of the tan one-story school building at 12:45 P.M. and thought they heard firecrackers. But as the students started to fall outside Westside Middle School, 12- and 13-year-olds dived for cover and one teacher threw herself in front of a student to save her. Within seconds, several students lay in their own blood on the school grounds, some screaming, some unmoving.

Only one of the students shot was a boy.

"I saw my best friend Natalie Brooks get killed. She was shot in the head twice," said 11-year-old Amber Vanoven. "I saw my friend laying down and in all this blood, and I just started running."

The attack was the fourth multiple killing in a school by a youth under the age of 17 in the last six months.

"I've been in this for a long time," said Sheriff Dale Haas of Craighead County. "This is the worst thing I had ever seen."

Officers with the Sheriff's Department arrested the two boys as they ran through the wooded area near the school, apparently heading for a white van that was parked nearby. Officials would not release the names of the boys because they are juveniles.

But students at the school identified them as 13-year-old Andrew Golden and 11-year-old Mitchell Johnson, both students at Westside.

Officer Terry McNatt, who was present at the arrest, said he knew one boy from an anti-drug class he taught in the school. He said both boys were calm as officers took them into custody. "They didn't say anything," Officer McNatt said.

The second judicial district prosecutor, Brent Davis, said he was researching whether the two boys could be charged as adults. Officials said that under Arkansas law no one under the age of 14 could be charged as an adult regardless of the crime committed.

Police officials were uncertain whether anyone else was involved in the shootings, but said a third individual might have pulled the alarm to lure the students outside where the two boys were waiting.

The two boys were apparently less than 100 yards from the school when they started firing as the students walked down a white cement sidewalk. A teacher's aide, Jennifer Gookin, said she ran out onto the playground after hearing someone had been shot.

"There were people laying everywhere. Blood was everywhere," Ms. Gookin said. "It was like it was all going on in slow motion. It was like

Continued on Page A20

Continued From Page A1

this is not happening. This is not supposed to happen at Westside."

Amber Vanoven said: "We all walked outside and they started shooting. I saw a teacher step in front of someone else and get shot."

The authorities identified the dead as Natalie Brooks, 11; Paige Ann Herring, 12; Stephanie Johnson, 12; Brittany R. Varner, 11, and a teacher, Shannon Wright, 32, who friends said was pregnant. Another teacher, Sarah Thetford, was in critical condition.

Students said the 13-year-old boy had bragged that he was going to shoot all the girls who had broken up with him.

Joshua Reynolds, a 13-year-old student, said the boy "had told a bunch of people that he was going to kill them."

"He bragged a lot because he was into gangs and stuff," Joshua said. "He had said he was mad at everybody and that he was going to kill them. Nobody believed him."

Another student, Charles Vanoven, said the 13-year-old "told me yesterday that all the people that broke up with him, he was going to go to school and kill them." Charles said the 13-year-old pulled a knife on another student in a school locker room the day before the ambush.

Debi Spencer, who teaches sixth grade, said a bullet hit a purse hanging from her shoulder. "I thought it was fireworks." Then she saw one student fall to the ground and hold up his arm, which was bleeding. "There was another students shot in the leg. I cut her jeans off and put a tourniquet on and just tried to hold her leg up and keep the pressure on it until the ambulance got there," she said. "It was a nightmare."

Linda Graham, a psychologist for Craighead County schools, described shock and then pandemonium at the school after the shooting. "The kids were scared, bewildered and a little angry," she said. "They were wanting their mamas. Then, the parents came and they were upset, too."

Children huddled in the school's gym this afternoon until parents who

were knocking to the school arrived to take them home. Four hours after the shooting, one dazed girl still sat in the gym being rocked back and forth by her mother.

The attack left residents of Jonesboro, a town of 46,000 roughly 130 miles northeast of Little Rock, reeling, and wondering why. Some wondered if the students were copying their crime from previous headlines.

On Dec. 15, Joseph Colt Todd, a 14-year-old, eighth-grade student hid in a tree and shot two students outside his high school in Stamps, Ark., a town in the southwestern part of the state. The wounded students, Grover Henderson, 17, and LaTisia Finley, 15, were both struck in the hip as they walked through a parking lot outside their 388-student school before classes began. Mr. Todd's lawyer said he had been bullied at the school.

On Dec. 1, 14-year-old Michael Carneal walked into Heath High School in West Paducah, Ky., and opened fire on a student prayer group. Saying only that he acted "like I was in a dream," Mr. Carneal shot to death three classmates and wounded five others as they gathered for a morning prayer. Mr. Carneal, a smallish, ninth-grader at the high school, fired 10 shots before Benjamin Strong, a football player and preacher's son, told him to stop.

Two months earlier, a 16-year-old student in Pearl, Miss., said to have been distraught over his breakup with his girlfriend, had been charged with stabbing his mother to death and then driving to school where he shot his former girlfriend and another girl and wounded seven others on Oct. 1. Six other teen-agers were later arrested as accomplices in what investigators described as a Satanic cult.

Luke T. Woodham, the 16-year-old who was charged in the shooting, maintained in a November television interview that he had been directed to kill by Grant Boyette, a friend whom the police have described as the mastermind of a teen-age cult. Mr. Woodham also apologized to the families of Christina Menefee, 16, and Lydia Kaye Dew, 17.

And in Norwalk, Calif., an estranged boyfriend walked into a high school to shoot his former girlfriend in late October. Khoa Truc Dang, 21, walked into John Glenn High School and killed his 16-year-old former girlfriend, Catherine Tran, 16, and then killed himself. The school was not equipped with metal detectors.

The latest attack left experts grasping for explanations. Statistically, violence is decreasing in public schools in the United States, said the National School Safety Center, but while the number of incidents is decreasing, the intensity of the attacks is rising and the age of the offenders is declining.

"I'm not sure that anyone knows why," said Ronald Stephens, executive director of the Westlake, Calif.-based group. "The standard response is to blame everyone in society, the parents, the schools, but one of the things we do know is that the perpetrators of crimes in many cases were first victims of abuse or neglect themselves."

The New York Times

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 1998

Boys' Ambush At Ark. School Leaves 5 Dead

Suspects Are 11 and 13; 11 Wounded in Rampage

By JOHN SCHWARTZ
Washington Post Staff Writer

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JONESBORO, Ark., March 24—Two heavily armed boys wearing camouflage clothing and hiding among trees today fired on a group of their middle school classmates and teachers as they scurried outside during a false fire alarm, authorities said. The ambush just outside this town of about 50,000 left four students and a teacher dead and 11 others wounded.

Police apprehended two suspects—ages 11 and 13—just minutes after the midday shooting outside Westside Middle School. Authorities said the boys were running away and were apprehended a few hundred yards from the shooting scene. It was unclear whether one of the boys or a third person pulled the alarm.

The suspects were wearing camouflage hats, shirts and pants and were armed with handguns and rifles, some of which appeared to be semiautomatics, police said. Two rifles and other weapons were seized. Police said the two suspects offered no resistance and said little as they were taken to a juvenile detention center. A court hearing was set for Wednesday. Police said the boys were students at the school, which

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has an enrollment of about 250.

One of the arresting officers, a counselor in the school's anti-drug program, was surprised to recognize one of the two boys as a participant in the program, according to a state police official.

Craighead County Sheriff Dale Haas said the suspects apparently were waiting in a wooded area behind the school for students and teachers to assemble outside after the false fire alarm. Once the students and staff began to emerge from the school building, they were greeted with a hail of gunfire, police said. The police said they found a cache of handguns and long guns at the site, which lay some 120 yards from the school.

Police said they arrived just four minutes after the shooting, which began shortly after noon. They immediately encountered a bloody, chaotic scene of screaming students and staff and stunned victims. "They were laid all over the place on the ground," Haas said of the victims.

Haas said that all but one of the shooting victims—including the five fatalities—were female. Another teacher was wounded in the incident.

Authorities identified the dead students as Natalie Brooks, Paige Ann Herring and Stephanie Johnson, all 12, and Brittany R. Varner, 11. Tonight, teacher Shannon Wright, 32, died at St. Bernards Regional Medical Center after surgery for wounds to her chest and abdomen.

One student, Amber Vanoven, 11, told the Associated Press that one of the assailants was aiming at a sixth-grade student, and "Mrs. Wright moved out in front of her. She got shot. . . . She did. I sat and watched her."

The other wounded teacher, Sara Thetford, was in critical condition tonight. Five students, all girls, were in stable condition at St. Bernards, while four students, a boy and three girls, were treated and released. Police said another person was wounded but not treated at the hospital; they offered no further details, AP reported.

The incident stunned longtime residents of this town, about 130 miles northeast of Little Rock. "We really haven't nailed down the 'why' yet," said Bob Troutt, assistant publisher of the Jonesboro Sun. Troutt said that guns and hunting are a normal part of growing up in the region and that "kids here are very much able to shoot weapons." Local schools grant a few days' holiday at the opening of deer season.

But the town is generally peaceful,

he said. "If we had four or five murders in a year, people would be up in arms. There's no violent crime to speak of." A growing town, Jonesboro boasts Arkansas State University as well as a medical center.

Near the gymnasium, yellow tape cordoned off the grassy area where the shootings occurred; a funeral wreath sat on a covered walkway. A hill rises about 30 feet above the rear of the school, where a fenced playground was silent tonight.

School employees wept in the Westside Middle School office tonight. Visibly shaken, the workers—like the students and faculty of the school—struggled to cope. "It was chaos—total chaos," said one worker, who refused to give his name.

The students were killed near the

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back of the gymnasium, where to-night at least 20 bereavement counselors met with dozens of students. Another 80 counselors met in the school's nearby administration building to discuss strategy for coping during the next few weeks.

The school serves the rural areas that spread out west of the town. It will remain closed indefinitely.

"I knew one of the victims, [Ashlee] Betts, from cheerleading clinic last summer," said 11-year-old Brandy Colburn, a student at another Jonesboro school. Ashlee is one of the five students who is in stable condition at the hospital.

Brandy attended the counseling with her mother, Janet Davis, who said she brought her daughter because "I could imagine my kids going through something like this. What would encourage 11- and 13-year-old boys to grab a gun and shoot kids they've gone to school with all their lives?" Davis asked.

Brandy said Westside students claimed the shooting was revenge for a girl "breaking up" with one of the suspects.

A classmate, Jennifer Nightingale, made a similar statement to AP about one of the suspects: "He told me after seventh period [Monday] that he was never going to see me again and I wouldn't be able to see him again because he was going to run away." She did not say whether any of the victims was the former girlfriend.

But the Craighead County Sheriff's Department has established no motive for the shooting.

Jonesboro was instantly inundated with the camera crews and reporters from around the world. Many fast-food restaurants in town quickly changed their signs to read "OUR HEARTS ARE WITH WESTSIDE."

From Uganda, President Clinton issued a statement about the shooting in his home state. In it, the president said that he and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton were "deeply shocked and heartbroken by what has happened."

"We don't know now and we may never fully understand what could have driven two youths to deliberately shoot into a crowd," the statement continued. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families and the entire Jonesboro community."

Educators called today's attack one of the most extreme incidents of violence ever at a school. The shooting also exposed one of their growing fears: that at an increasingly young age, students seem to have easy access to deadly weapons and no qualms about using them.

Schools nationwide are hiring more security officers, even forcing students to pass through metal detec-

tors on the way to class, but at times principals and teachers say they still feel vulnerable to kids with guns.

"This is horrible," said Anne Bryant, the executive director of the National School Boards Association. "It's a serious issue for our society—we've got to keep these weapons away from children. We just can't keep turning schools into armed camps."

Robert T.M. Phillips, a psychiatrist who serves as medical director of Forensic Consultation Associates of Annapolis, said that he was not familiar with the facts of the Jonesboro case.

He did say, however, that "in general, we're seeing in our society an ever-increasing outbreak of violence by juveniles and children."

Phillips said Justice Department statistics show that four times as many juveniles were killed with guns in 1994 as in 1984—at a time when "we're getting some control over crime in the adult population."

"Were these children acting out a fantasy they had seen or read about somewhere?" Phillips asked. Had they somehow become so emotionally disturbed that they could not distinguish fantasy from reality? While it might be somehow comforting to look for a simple cause such as mental illness or even an eerily similar scene for a recent movie, Phillips said, the truth is far more complex—and more troubling.

Staff writers Michael A. Fletcher and Rene Sanchez in Washington and special correspondent C. Richard Cotton in Jonesboro contributed to this report.



THE PHOTOS VIA JONESBORO SUN
The five killed in the Arkansas middle school ambush were, from left, students Stephanie Johnson, Brittany R. Varner, Natalie Brooks and Paige Ann Herring, and teacher Shannon Wright, 32. Brittany was 11; the other girls were 12.

The Washington Post

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 1998

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Just recently, we released a report
lead recent report

Join/
Repeat kids' names from KY + MS

Reassurance - school are safe

- juvenile crimes
- schools can be / are safe