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HEADLINE: Following The Guns One was built in Miami, another crafted by an Ohio family business; the final two were too old to trace. On April 20, all four were used by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold

BYLINE: By David **Olinger**, (C)1999 The Denver Post Corp.

BODY:

Dylan Klebold walked into his high school cafeteria carrying an assault pistol originally designed as a submachine gun for the white South African government.

Eric Harris wielded a black semiautomatic rifle produced by an Ohio company whose owner says he just wanted to make guns for the average working man.

The two **Columbine** High seniors also had a couple of old shotguns that could have come from any hunter's closet - except both had been sawed off, making them concealable and able to spray ammunition over a wider area.

At lunchtime on April 20, they opened fire. In the next hour, they killed or wounded 35 people and reignited the national debate over the manufacture, distribution and sporadically regulated trade of guns in America.

To examine that trade, The Denver Post followed the trail of the guns used in the worst school shooting in U.S. history. The journey led from a European gun designer in South Africa to a handgun seller whose mother belongs to Handgun Control Inc., from a mom-and-pop factory that made its first rifles in 1996 to the Longmont gun shop of a retired police sergeant, from the 1994 assault-weapons ban to the 1999 assault-weapons market.

Along the way, parents, police officers, gun makers and firearms dealers continue to wrestle with the gun-control questions **Columbine** spawned. Should all gun sales be regulated? Why can juveniles buy semiautomatic rifles? In a nation with enough guns to arm almost every man, woman and child, could any set of laws prevent such massacres?

Those questions flared anew last week with the bloodshed in Atlanta - which left 13 people dead, including gunman Mark O. Barton - and as Congress finalized the members of a bipartisan conference committee that will try to hash out an agreement over

gun-control legislation.

The guns of **Columbine** were old and new. They were manufactured in three states, promoted by catalog and telemarketer, sold at small gun stores and large **gun shows**. But in the end, all four were sold anonymously to teenagers, no questions asked, no background checks, no purchase forms, no signatures.

Klebold's TEC-DC9 was a heavy, awkward handgun built to fire dozens of bullets in seconds, advertised as fingerprint-resistant and sold, according to one criminal-justice expert, to people with a remarkable propensity for killing.

Two TEC-DC9s were used in the massacre at a San Francisco law office that led Congress to ban the manufacture of assault weapons in 1994. Klebold's TEC-DC9 was made during the congressional debate by a Miami gun maker who tripled production to beat the ban - and called it his best year ever.

Harris' rifle was shipped to an Alabama distributor in September, then changed hands at least four times in the next three months. In Ohio, the man whose family business made the rifle expressed dismay that it was used to shoot children.

"We've felt sick ever since this happened," Hi-Point Firearms owner Tom Deeb said. Yet he takes pride in the guns he helped design, and in their affordability for people who love to shoot for recreation.

"Dang it, this is America, isn't it?" he said. "If you make something that works pretty good for less, that's not a bad thing, is it?"

A different question plagues Tom Mauser. His 15-year-old son asked it one April evening. "Dad," Daniel said, "did you know there were loopholes in the Brady bill?"

Daniel was a bright sophomore on the **Columbine** High debate team. He liked to discuss important social issues. That night he explained that the 1994 federal law requiring criminal background checks of gun buyers applies only to sales involving licensed gun-store owners. It does not apply to private transactions involving unlicensed vendors at **gun shows**.

Two weeks later, Daniel was shot to death in the **Columbine** High library with a semiautomatic weapon that slipped through that very loophole.

"There is something wrong in a country," his father said, "when a child can so easily get a gun and so readily fire a gun in the face of a child."

From South Africa to **Columbine**

The TEC-DC9's journey to America began with George Kellgren, a Swedish designer of military guns.

In the 1970s, South Africa's apartheid government was in the market for a new gun. It wanted something light and portable, yet capable of firing at machine-gun speed. Kellgren got a contract and designed a military submachine gun, akin to the Israeli Uzi, with a lightweight plastic stock.

When South Africa failed to produce it, Kellgren began writing to firearms dealers in the United States, seeking a partner in the manufacturing business.

He found one in Miami.

Carlos Garcia, a young man who had fled Cuba with his family, ran a small store in the city's Little Havana neighborhood called Garcia's National Guns. Garcia had no gun-manufacturing experience. But he had a knack for marketing, and he liked the paramilitary look of the handgun Kellgren sketched.

Together they formed Interdynamics Inc. in the early 1980s, producing their handgun and selling it at Garcia's store. They called it the KG-9 - K for Kellgren, G for Garcia - and described it as a weapon "combining the high capacity and controlled firepower of the military submachine gun with the legal status and light weight of a handgun."

The KG-9 cost about \$ 70 to produce. It was sold as a semiautomatic, firing one bullet with each squeeze of the trigger. But when federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents examined it, they found the KG-9 could easily be converted to a submachine gun, shooting a stream of bullets with a squeeze of the trigger.

The agency declared the KG-9 an illegal machine gun in 1982 and halted its production.

Kellgren and Garcia then introduced the KG-99, a semiautomatic less readily turned into a machine gun. But they sold it with an "assault grip" accessory designed for two-handed spray firing of a handgun with a 36-round ammunition magazine.

Again, ATF stepped in. No assault grip on the KG-99.

In 1984, Kellgren left the business. Garcia's father entered, renaming the corporation Intratec Firearms and the KG-99 the TEC-9. Four years later, Carlos Garcia took over Intratec and created a new umbrella company, Navegar Inc.

Under his direction, Navegar became known for its provocative - some say reprehensible - promotion of Intratec's TEC-9s.

One ad referred to its "excellent resistance to fingerprints." Garcia later said that merely meant its finish would not rust from handling. Another ad featured a bikini-clad woman on her hands and knees, cradling an assault weapon. Another used a human head and heart as bull's-eyes, with gun smoke pouring from both.

It was precisely the kind of advertising, lawyers would argue, that would appeal to someone like Gian Luigi Ferri.

Gunmaker plays the name game

Garcia did not respond to interview requests. But he spoke at length in depositions taken for the lawsuit stemming from Ferri's 1993 massacre.

Ferri was an avid reader of *Soldier of Fortune*, a Boulder-based magazine in which the TEC-9 was advertised, and a disgruntled client of the Pettit and Martin law firm in San Francisco.

When Ferri went gun shopping, TEC-9s could no longer be purchased legally in his home state. California had banned several assault weapons by name, including the TEC-9, after Patrick Purdy shot up a Stockton schoolyard in 1989 with an AK-47, killing five children. The District of Columbia followed with a 1991 law, also naming the TEC-9, that held assault-weapon manufacturers liable for any shootings involving their guns.

Garcia responded by introducing the TEC-DC9 in 1992. He called it a different gun from the TEC-9, noting minor changes in its grip and in the place where the owner could attach a shoulder sling. But Navegar first produced 36,000 TEC-DC9s that were identical to its TEC-9s - except for the label stamped on the guns.

Ferri went to Nevada, where he bought two TEC-DC9s that differed from TEC-9s in label only. He tested them at a firing range where another shooter heard him mutter, "I don't like lawyers, I don't like lawyers."

On July 1, 1993, Ferri stepped off the elevator on the 34th floor of a San Francisco building and into Pettit and Martin's law offices. Armed with his two TEC-DC9s, ammunition magazines with 40 to 50 bullets and a .45-caliber Norinco pistol, he walked from room to room and floor to floor, firing barrages of 9mm bullets, finishing off some victims with the Norinco. He killed eight people and wounded six others, then shot himself.

Law-office massacre claims Colorado victim

Jody Sposato had come to Pettit and Martin that day with a sex-discrimination complaint. She was giving a deposition in a conference room when Ferri sprayed it with gunfire.

"She was shot five times in the back," said her husband, Stephen Sposato.

Sposato buried his wife in Evergreen, her hometown. Their 10-month-old daughter, Meghan, put a tiny handful of dirt on Jody's grave. He held his baby girl, telling her "Mommy was killed, she wasn't coming home anymore, she would live in our hearts. And that somehow, I would make it OK."

Sposato and his daughter are plaintiffs in a lawsuit against Garcia's gun company.

"What this guy's giving us is weapons of war," Sposato said. "Mr. Garcia ought to include in his gun manuals how to tell a 10-month-old that Mommy's dead."

One of the plaintiffs' witnesses is James Alan Fox, a criminal-justice expert at Northeastern University in Boston. Using federal gun-tracing statistics from 1990-94, he concluded that TEC-9 owners were five times more likely to commit murder than other handgun owners. He also found that more TEC-9s had been traced from crime scenes than any other assault weapon for five consecutive years.

"Essentially, the TEC-9 was a gun of choice for offenders, particularly those who commit homicides," Fox said in an interview.

Navegar's lawyer, Ernest Getto, responded that TEC-DC9s were manufactured, distributed and sold legally. "Navegar was scrupulous in following the law in California and didn't market or sell any of the TEC-DC9s even to distributors in California," he said.

Getto said police found no Navegar ads among Ferri's reading materials. He also disputed Fox's conclusions, saying police are more likely to trace assault weapons than other guns.

In a deposition, Garcia described the TEC-9 as a fun gun for "plinking" cans and defended its large ammunition magazines.

"Nobody really enjoys sitting there while you're shooting, especially plinking, whether it be cans or targets, sit there and have to change every five or 10 rounds. The more rounds you have, the easier it is, the more fun you have," he said.

Garcia acknowledged the TEC-9's appeal to survivalists preparing for possible civil chaos. "As it happened in Cuba, as it happened in the Soviet Union, as it happened in China, as it can happen here," he said.

He was asked if he would sell machine guns to the general public if that were legal.

"With certain restrictions, yes," he said.

Two Navegar employees actually tried to sell machine guns. They supplied fully automatic weapons and a video explaining how to convert TEC-9s into machine guns to a man posing as a visitor from the Philippines.

The buyer was an ATF agent. The employees were sentenced in 1994 to a year in federal prison for selling illegal weapons.

In 1997, the judge in the California lawsuit against Navegar found the company's advertising "irresponsible at best, bordering on the reprehensible." But he also found Navegar was not responsible for Ferri's actions and dismissed the suit.

The case is pending before a California appeals court.

Also in 1997, Carlos Garcia moved into a new, 14,516-square-foot waterfront home in the Miami suburb of Coral Gables with a backyard dock suitable for his 37-foot boats. Its assessed value: \$ 2.9 million.

Massacre brings focus to problem

Three weeks after the San Francisco massacre, U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, a California Democrat, denounced the massacre and called for a ban on assault weapons, including the TEC-9 and TEC-DC9.

She co-sponsored a bill outlawing the manufacture of 19 guns, all other "copycat" guns and the production of magazines holding more than 10 bullets. It did not prohibit owning or selling assault weapons, and many semiautomatic pistols and rifles were exempted from the manufacturing ban.

The ensuing debate was lengthy, the votes in both houses of Congress close. Feinstein's bill passed the Senate in November 1993 after a motion to table it failed 51-49. The House version passed 216-214 in May 1994, and a contentious conference committee fight preceded its final passage that summer.

Meanwhile, prices of the affected guns climbed, and their makers hastened production. According to ATF records, Navegar made about 58,000 9mm handguns in 1992 and 1993, the first two years of TEC-DC9 production. It made 75,000 more in 1994, despite the manufacturing ban that took effect in mid-September. Garcia said his company made a record \$ 1.7 million that year. Navegar's production numbers suggest that during that final flurry of production, while Congress spent a year debating whether to ban assault weapons, it produced a gun stamped as its 76,305th TEC-DC9.

It was a gun destined for another massacre. 'It wasn't the gun, it was the people'

Baldwin, Ill., is home to 450 people, a country store, a farm-supply store, a couple of saloons and one of the nation's largest gun distributors.

Set among the cornfields of Randolph County is Zanders Sporting Goods, a thriving business with a 676-page catalog devoted mostly to hunting supplies, but also offering handguns and a few exotic weapons.

Three years after the manufacture of TEC-DC9s was banned, Zanders sold one stamped with the serial number D076305. Bart Eaton, a company vice president, declined to discuss that sale.

But others in Randolph County defend Zanders, calling it a reputable company that has provided local jobs for generations. "It wasn't the gun that did the damage. It was the people shooting the gun," said Sheila Scheffer, the Baldwin country store owner.

Sheriff's Deputy Mike Hoelscher considers the county lucky to have Zanders. "They're very knowledgeable and very easy to get along with. They work hard."

But as he stared at the page in Zanders' new catalog featuring Intratec guns, he found himself debating their purpose.

"This would be something I would expect the bad guy to have," he said. "It's no good for me as a hunter. None. As a police officer, it's not something I would want to have. What the hell's it good for?"

Five years after Congress outlawed the manufacture of magazines with more than 10 rounds, Zanders sells the "after-ban" version of the TEC-DC9 - with a pre-ban magazine that holds 32 rounds. The wholesale price: \$ 159.95.

'The stores just can't make it'

Royce Spain often bought guns from Zanders. "Everybody knew about Zanders," he said. "Just like, where do you go to buy groceries? Safeway."

Spain owned Just Guns, a tiny Federal Heights storefront sandwiched between a bar and a burrito shop, when he bought a TEC-DC9 stamped D076305 in 1997. He never particularly liked TEC-9s. He didn't consider them reliable. Some customers who bought TEC-9s from him tried to return them, claiming they jammed.

Yet he probably sold more TEC-9s than anything else. In a competitive market that often forced gun shops out of business, "it was one gun you could make money on," he said.

Spain rarely sold a gun at Just Guns. The store was rarely open. He spent his weekdays hunting for deals at pawn shops and his weekends at **gun shows**, where he made about 95 percent of his sales.

"The **gun shows** have monopolized the market," he said. "The stores just can't make it."

Federal regulations require a licensed firearms dealer to have a business location with regular hours. Failing to operate the business as licensed can be grounds for revocation. But there are 104,000 licensed firearms dealers in the United States, or 130 for every ATF inspector, and a gun store that rarely opens may go unnoticed.

Federal regulations also require firearms dealers to keep records of each sale and call for a criminal background check of each customer, including those at **gun shows**. But when

a gun dealer goes out of business, he can put any remaining guns into his personal collection and sell them without records or background checks. He also can let a friend sell those guns on consignment.

That's what Royce Spain did.

No. D076305 moves into personal collection

For much of his life Spain worked intermittently in the firearms trade with an older man he met at a Denver church. As a teenager, Spain helped Larry Russell take guns to weekend **gun shows**. Later, he worked at Russell's gun and fireworks stores. When Spain opened his own gun business in 1997, Russell helped him run it.

And when Spain decided in 1998 that Just Guns was not paying his bills, he converted about 30 store guns to his personal collection and turned them over to Russell.

One was gun No. D076305.

Selling TEC-DC9s is illegal in Denver, which has banned their possession. But they are sold legally at the Denver Merchandise Mart just outside the city limits in Adams County, where the Tanner **Gun Show** is held 10 times a year.

Russell took Spain's guns to a Tanner show last August. By then Spain no longer had a federal firearms license. Neither, at the time, did Russell. Because sales by unlicensed vendors at **gun shows** are not regulated, Russell was able to sell the TEC-DC9 legally, and anonymously, to a young man looking for a high-powered handgun.

The buyer was Mark Manes, a 22-year-old computer technician whose mother is a member of Handgun Control Inc.

Manes did not own his new assault weapon for long. Phillip Duran, a friend who worked at a Blackjack Pizza parlor in Jefferson County, told him "two guys" at the pizza place were looking for a TEC-9. On Jan. 23, at another Tanner **Gun Show**, Duran introduced Manes to the two guys. They were both 17, too young to buy a handgun legally. But Manes offered to sell it for \$ 500, and they agreed.

That night, Manes sold the gun at the house where he lived with his parents, on a suburban street not far from **Columbine High**.

The buyers were Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris.

Weeks after selling a TEC-DC9 privately to Manes, Larry Russell applied for a new federal firearms license. He opened his gun store at the same location where Royce Spain owned Just Guns.

Spain now lives with his parents, his grandmother and his 6-year-old daughter in a small

Weld County home, where he has struggled with his own questions about unregulated gun sales. His answer: Abolish **gun shows** and make all sales go through licensed dealers, with background checks and customer records.

"**Gun shows**, in my opinion, are the biggest danger," he said. "If I were a gangster I would go to a **gun show**. People with AK-47s walking up and down the aisles. ... It's just a fester spot."

'I make guns for the working man'

More than three months after the **Columbine** High massacre, the TEC-DC9 is the only gun investigators have managed to trace from its manufacturer, through all its sellers and buyers, to Harris and Klebold.

Their shotguns were made about 30 years ago by Savage Corp., a Massachusetts company that has since been sold. ATF agents found the serial number of one shotgun in a box of records returned by a wholesaler going out of business. From there the trail went cold.

The semiautomatic rifle came from Tom Deeb's factory in Mansfield, Ohio. It was a carbine - a short-barreled rifle - that fires the same type of bullet as a TEC-DC9. Its magazine holds 10 rounds, the maximum allowed by the assault weapons law.

Deeb's carbine sells for about \$ 180, one of the lowest-priced rifles on the market. "I make guns for the working man," he said. "I want you to shoot it. I'm proud of this sonofabitch."

He paused. "Now people are starting to use them for crimes. Which is heinous."

From Hi-Point, ATF agents traced Eric Harris' carbine to Walter Craig Inc., a Selma, Ala., distributor that received the gun in September and uses telemarketers to sell firearms to retail dealers.

Gene Lumsden, Walter Craig's president, consoled the shocked telemarketer who learned she had sold one of the **Columbine** guns. He sees immorality, not the easy availability of guns, as the fundamental problem illuminated by **Columbine**. And "you can never legislate morality," he said.

Walter Craig shipped the carbine to Grandpa's Pawn and Gun, a small Main Street store in Longmont with a collection of John Wayne photos overlooking its firearms display. Grandpa's was opened in 1994 by John Teeple, a retired Loveland police sergeant. He declined to discuss the carbine sale.

The gun buyer at Grandpa's was one of at least three people who owned the carbine within a three-month period. Grandpa's customer was required by law to fill out a purchase form and pass a background check. But the buyer - whose name has not been

disclosed - sold the carbine to someone else. The new owner sold it again, anonymously, at the Tanner **Gun Show** in December. Investigators still don't know who sold the carbine there. But they identified the buyer as an 18-year-old **Columbine** student, Robyn Anderson. She was accompanied by two 17-year-olds, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, and shopping with their cash.

Anderson bought the two shotguns at the same show.

Federal law forbids gun dealers to sell shotguns or rifles to anyone younger than 18. It also forbids "straw" sales to someone obviously acquiring guns for people ineligible to buy them.

But those prohibitions apply only to licensed firearms dealers. Anderson bought two shotguns and the carbine from three different unlicensed sellers at the show. Because all were private sales, none could be classified as "straw" purchases made for juveniles. In fact, Klebold and Harris did not need an 18-year-old's help to buy shotguns or a semiautomatic rifle from a private **gun-show** vendor.

Legally, they could have bought all three by themselves.

Guns earn final infamy

On April 20, Harris and Klebold launched their attack.

They brought four guns, hundreds of bullets and shotgun shells and numerous high-capacity ammunition magazines. They walked into the **Columbine** cafeteria at lunchtime, tossing homemade bombs and spraying gunfire. They chased crowds of screaming students, firing streams of bullets.

Hours later, SWAT officers found the bodies of Klebold, 17, and Harris, who had just turned 18, in the school library where they had shot themselves. The bodies of 10 other students lay around them.

A teacher was bleeding to death in a science room. The bodies of two other students lay outside the school. Nineteen other students and a teacher had been wounded by gunfire, four of them paralyzed.

Investigators who gathered up the guns, the shells, the shrapnel and the bullets noticed some of the high-capacity magazines held unfired ammunition. Blessedly, at some moments during the massacre, Klebold's TEC-DC9 evidently jammed.

Gun-control plans spur close votes

West of Miami, in a gray building bereft of signs identifying its occupant, Navegar Inc. now makes the AB-10, its "after-ban" version of the TEC-DC9. It is made to accept pre-ban ammunition magazines, which remain abundant.

Two of the weapons Garcia's factory once made were on sale at his gun store last month. A KG-99, made in the 1980s, was priced at \$ 300. A TEC-DC9, made before its manufacture was banned in September 1994, was \$ 350. Both came with 20-round magazines.

A sales clerk said both guns were new. In Colorado, Mark Manes and Phillip Duran were arrested on felony charges of selling a handgun to minors. So far they are the only people facing charges related to the **Columbine** High massacre.

Across the nation, **Columbine** has become the watchword of the gun-control debate.

Colorado legislators shelved bills that would have liberalized concealed-weapons permits, would have overruled Denver's assault-weapons ban and would have forbidden cities to sue gun manufacturers.

The U.S. Senate narrowly passed legislation requiring sales records and background checks on all **gun-show** transactions. But the House defeated the Senate proposal, and the issue is about to be taken up by a conference committee.

In many state capitols, gun-control advocates gained ground in their yearly battles with the National Rifle Association. Most notably, California's governor signed one of the toughest gun-control laws in the country last month, requiring the registration of assault weapons and forbidding owners to sell, give or will them to descendants. It limits handgun purchases to one per month per person.

The lessons of **Columbine**?

"We have to reduce the general availability of guns like military-style assault weapons that are literally designed for mass killings," said Dennis Henigan, an attorney with the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, which represents plaintiffs in the California lawsuit against Navegar.

"But we also need to completely regulate the sale of guns in this country," he added, licensing the nation's gun owners and registering sales of their 240 million guns, "just like the ownership of a car."

The NRA argues that licensing leads to confiscation and that criminal background checks at **gun shows** would not have prevented the killings at **Columbine** High.

"When you talk about two very troubled, deranged people who violate some 19 or 20 firearms laws and go to school and shoot their friends and classmates, there's something far more troubling going on than whether we have an instant check at a **gun show**," said NRA spokesman Bill Powers.

Division Chief John Kiekbusch, the Jefferson County sheriff's official heading the

Columbine investigation, wonders why Colorado laws permit juveniles to buy any gun but a handgun.

"We have laws to prevent kids from purchasing booze," he said. "We have laws to prevent kids from buying cigarettes. Yet we allow them to buy shotguns, rifles and ammunition."

Tom Mauser also continues to search for answers. He wonders how anyone could advertise a gun as resistant to fingerprints, or market advice on converting semi-automatic weapons to machine guns, or provide firearms to two kids without weighing the possible consequences.

"I think it's a deep cultural change we have to make," he said. "We take guns so casually."

GRAPHIC: PHOTOS: Palm Beach Post Gunmaker Carlos Garcia, above, holds a TEC-9, the precursor of the TEC-DC9, which was manufactured in the Miami plant. A TEC-DC9 was used by **Columbine** High assailant Dylan Klebold. **PHOTOS:** Special to The Denver Post/Alan Diaz Making guns has profitable for Carlos Garcia, who bought this \$ 2.9 million waterfront home near Miami in 1997. The gun factory owned by Carlos Garcia in Miami. Garcia has defended his weapons, saying, 'The more rounds you have, the easier it is, the more fun you have.' The gun shop of Carlos Garcia in Miami. Garcia is co-founder of the gun-manufacturing business that eventually produced what came to be known as the TEC-DC9. Randolph County (Ill.) sheriff's Deputy Mike Hoelscher holds a Zands Sporting Goods gun catalog. **PHOTOS:** Spain Duran **PHOTO:** The Denver Post/John Epperson Grandpa's Pawn and Gun in Longmont was one stop for the carbine that ended up at the Tanner show, and later in the killers' Hands. **PHOTO:** The Denver Post/Hyoung Chang Tom Mauser, father of **Columbine** victim Daniel Mauser, continues to lobby for gun controls. **PHOTO:** Associated Press/KUSA-TV Robyn Anderson, seen in a photo from a 9News videotape taken in April, bought shotguns for the killers. **PHOTO:** The Denver Post/Karl Gehring Mark Manes, left, shown with his attorney in May, legally bought the TEC-DC9 last year. In January, he sold it to Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. **GRAPHICS:** The Denver Post Tracking the **Columbine** guns (map) Pistol productionGunmen's weapons

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