

Massacre shocks society with senseless bloodshed

Last week's Virginia Tech massacre set a record for a gunman run amok, 32 innocent lives.

The nation reeled in shock and horror, but the incident — as many do — revealed both the worst and the best about our society.

Seung-Hui Cho showed again what a demented gunman can do. Others emerged as heroes, taking action and saving lives while the carnage progressed.

In one classroom, senior Zach Petkewicz and his fellows in his class in Norris Hall barricaded the door, saving their lives and perhaps others. When the gunman tried to shove his way in, they shoved back, working together and thinking on their feet.

In another classroom, Liviu Librescu, who had survived the holocaust as a young man, blocked the door to give his students time to escape. All lived — except the professor.

Mr. Librescu was buried Friday in Israel, hailed as a hero. And he was.

There will be much second guessing, but no one yet has explained why people sometimes go crazy and decide to kill innocent people. Mass murder is nothing new, but these crazed gunmen seem to become more lethal with every try.

Seung-Hui Cho was not particularly heavily armed. He carried just a couple of pistols — not the shotguns and machine guns sometimes favored by the criminally insane — but he used them with great effect.

As usual, he did not stick around to answer for his crimes.

Gun control advocates will call for new laws, but most people seem to see the futility of that.

University officials and security forces will take a beating for not sounding the alarm sooner, but the first shooting, involving just one victim and a dormitory resident assistant who investigated, hardly seemed cause for a campus-wide lockdown.

Others are second guessing NBC's decision to air photos and tapes sent in the mail between the two sets of shootings.

Some say the networks should have held back, ditched the tapes, turned them over to the police or buried them.

That's foolish. The images are disturbing, that is certain. But we need to see them. People need to know how crazy some of us can be.

No purpose would be served by censoring the tapes. It would not bring one person back to life.

If society can learn from them, from the senseless killings, from the fact that many saw this man as deranged and possibly dangerous, but still authorities did nothing, then perhaps all is not in vain. Perhaps.

Society has a difficult time dealing with the issue of people who might be crazy. How can we predict who will be next to "go postal?" And if we could, would we be able to lock them up, change them, protect ourselves?

There are no easy answers here, but there's no benefit to sticking our heads in the sand. We need to look for those answers. And pray.

— Steve Haynes



Excess of gum grosses her out

It's part of my job at the newspaper to cover social events. Prom certainly falls into the "social" category. I have been to proms the last two weekends in a row and I'm feeling a little "prommed out."

After hearing me rant, someone accused me of being the "prom police." But certainly a class sponsor or adult leader should have spotted the enormous amount of gum being chewed by the prom-goers before they stepped into public view.

I don't have anything against gum-chewing per se. I enjoy the occasional Juicy Fruit myself. But when all eyes are going to be on you, I would think you wouldn't want to look like a cow chewing her cud.

I'm sure it was just a subconscious thing, and most even forgot they had gum in their mouths. Next year, maybe a mom will post herself at the entrance and command, "Spit!" when she sees a chomping offender.

-ob-

When I was in school (here we go again), chewing gum would earn you a one-way trip to the principal's office. Girls weren't allowed to wear slacks (forget jeans) and boys



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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had to have their shirts tucked in and belts on their pants. T-shirts were considered underwear and only white ones could peek through the neck of a boy's shirt. Girls' skirts had to be, at least, to the top of the knee. And no one was allowed to have a toothpick stuck in their mouth. Another no-no was public display of affection, or "necking," as we called it. Even handholding was *verboten*.

-ob-

Were kids any better then than they are now? I don't know. It seemed like we had a little clearer picture of right and wrong. But kids these days have a better sense of self and know what they want to do with their lives.

When I graduated from high

school, I didn't have a clue. College was not even a blip on my radar screen until one of my classmates called me a week before school was to start.

"Hey, Kelley, come on down," she said. (She lived in Winfield by then). "We can go to Juco (Arkansas City); the classes are cheap and the boys are cute."

Say no more. That's all the thought I gave to my future: cute boys.

-ob-

Right now, we have a granddaughter in high school and a steady stream of grandchildren coming along behind her. What will their future hold?

I don't know. But the possibilities are exciting and endless.

Mystery cat finally has name

Well, I've finally named the new cat.

Not intentionally, but by default, she's now Pretty Thing.

By moving the food bowl up from the basement and making her come into the kitchen for food and water, we've forced her to spend a little time closer to the center of the house.

This doesn't mean that she is starting to interact much with the family. It just means that she sneaks upstairs and hides under Steve's desk in the kitchen until the coast is clear and she can get to the food.

Many times lately as she has slunk closer and closer to the source of all cat food, I've seen her and talked to her saying something like, "Good morning, pretty thing." or "Hi, pretty thing, how are you today?"

Of all the ways of naming a cat, this seems to be the oddest. But this is the weirdest cat I've ever had, and I've had some strange ones.

There was Spazo. He was, well spastic. He had been brought into the clinic at K-State to be put to sleep because his front legs and back legs didn't work together. My brother-in-law, a vet student, adopted and named him. When he graduated and moved to California, we inherited Spazo. (We picked him over the pregnant dog, which my other brother-in-law got.)

We got Kubla Khan's name from a National Geographic article about Genghis Khan. We knew we would have trouble with Genghis so we chose an easier khan.

April Alice got her name because we got her in April and I knew her



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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name began with an "A" but I couldn't remember what it was, so after several months of calling her April, Ann and Alice we settled on a two-name moniker.

Molly was named by my son-in-law, who picked her up at a construction site. She got the Monster part of her name because she is terrorizes every other cat in the house. People, too.

Jezebel, my daughter named. I don't know why and I'm not asking. Some things you just don't want to know.

I think that Pretty Thing would like to join the family — she's just too scared.

First, people are big — really big — and they probably eat cats for breakfast.

Then there's Molly Monster. She's mean. She beats up on poor little defenseless kitties. Of course, Molly has been declawed and Pretty Thing hasn't, but with cats it's mostly growl and bluff and Molly would make a great poker player. She's full of growl and bluff.

April Alice is also a little intimidating. She growls when Pretty Thing gets too close. She's not as

mean or as big as Molly, but she's a full-grown adult cat, who's learned to hold her own ground around the Monster.

Jez is the only cat in the place that Pretty Thing doesn't seem afraid of. Probably because Jez is mostly a basement cat herself and probably showed the newcomer all the best hiding places.

I'm still not sure that Pretty Thing is here to stay and I'm going to have to catch her one way or the other real soon. She's almost six months old and hasn't been to see the vet. I really don't need or want a basement full of kittens, even if they are all pretty little things.

One is more than enough, thank you.

From the Bible

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Matthew 5: 4

Nicaragua in 'wait-and-see'

Francisco Chamorro is not happy with the new government of Nicaragua.

The old Sandinista revolutionary, Daniel Ortega, finally is the elected president of his country, third-poorest in Latin America after only Haiti and Cuba.

Already, he's threatened to tax newsprint, which must be imported from the U.S. or Canada, and perhaps muzzle the struggling press.

Sr. Chamorro worries about the family newspaper he is running, *Nuevo Diario*, where he is assistant director, or editor. In his office, reached by open metal stairs in a building where paint is peeling, he serves visitors water and worries about his country.

"Nobody is doing better with Ortega in charge," he says in slightly accented English.

Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez has promised Ortega \$340 million in oil money and a new refinery, though the country has no oil to refine.

"In the end, Chavez may win," he says.

Meantime in Nicaragua, along with talk of a newsprint tax to punish the press, there's fear that Ortega will threaten the broadcast licenses of the nation's television stations.

The country has no laws requiring public records to be open, as the U.S. does, Sr. Chamorro says. Protections for the free press are weak.

He says the five years with President Ortega in charge will be a challenge to a democracy that dates back just three elected presidents. Everyone in steamy Managua, the capital city, agrees.

On his office is a larger-than-life poster of his uncle, Pedro Joaquín



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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Chamorro, an icon of journalism in a country where being an editor is a tough business. Pedro Chamorro was assassinated in the last days of the Somoza dictatorship, in 1978. He had been jailed for his writing, but assassination made him a national martyr.

The same poster decorates the offices of Pedro Chamorro's own newspaper, *La Prensa*, across town. He is claimed by both branches of his family; *Nuevo Diario* is only about 25 years old, however.

What will happen to the paper? Francisco Chamorro shrugs. His oldest son is not interested in the business. The younger son is only 14. He is worried enough about the present to attend, with his father, a meeting the next day with Arnaldo Aleman, the discredited ex-president who remains a political figure and party leader. Many editors and media owners are here.

Sr. Aleman says he wants to protect freedom of the press. He introduces visiting American editors, makes an impassioned speech. The editors and station owners look suitably worried, though a few notable luminaries have stayed away.

"Aleman is a crook," says one. "How can they meet with him?"

The ex-president is indeed a convicted felon, convicted of masterminding a scheme to loot the trea-

sury of dirt-poor Nicaragua of \$100 million while in office. He remains under a form a house arrest, not in prison, but unable to leave Managua.

Among the missing are Carlos Briceño, owner of Channel 8, Managua's most popular television station, and relatives of Pedro Chamorro. While worried about the Ortega administration's threats to press freedom, he expresses disdain for the still-popular Aleman.

For his growing television empire, he says he fears the next five years will be a challenge, requiring a "delicate balancing act."

Everyone knows this is a different Daniel Ortega from the one who ran Nicaragua as a Sandinista strongman in the 1980s. Then, people say, those who opposed him just disappeared. Today, he has to live within the constitution, they hope. He says he is working with investors and others. He became a Catholic and banned abortion.

All of them, Sr. Briceño, Sr. Chamorro, President Aleman, continue to make plans for the future, whatever that holds. Many hope it will include a better economy for everyone in this desperately poor nation, though having the Sandinistas back does not create confidence.

Only time will tell which it is.

Taxpayers, beware of big increase

By KARL PETERJOHN
Kansas Taxpayers Network

On the rare occasions the mainstream national news media bothers to cover federal spending and taxes, you are sure to hear the phrase "pay as you go" as the primary talking point of the new congressional Democratic majority.

This is supposed to reassure us now that the profligate "Bridge to Nowhere," free spending Republicans have been relegated into the minority.

New York City Congressman Charlie Rangel, who now heads the powerful tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, wants to dismantle the most successful legacy of George W. Bush's administration, the 2001 and 2003 federal tax cuts.

Opinion

These are scheduled to expire because of arcane congressional budgeting rules. However, budgets must be enacted now and not put off until after the 2008 election.

Liberal North Dakota Sen. Byron Dorgan, who heads up the Budget Committee in the Senate, is joining Rep. Rangel in this push. While the national "news" media is focused on Al Sharpton's take on the Don Imus firing or the latest DNA results from the Bahamas, there is a large federal tax hike in your future as well as increased IRS powers to enforce tax laws.

Congressional liberals want you to "Pay MORE as you go," and the lower federal income tax rate of 10 percent, increased child credit, and pro-growth capital gains and dividend tax rates from the 2003 Bush tax cuts are likely to expire.

The *Wall Street Journal* warned its readers, "The Bush tax cuts don't expire until 2010, and Democrats aren't about to tip their tax hand before the 2008 election. But under cover of zero media attention, Democrats are constructing a budget process that will make a tax increase ... inevitable."

Kansans reading these words have now been warned. Tax and spend has returned with the Democratic majority that now controls Congress.

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Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals mail postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers
Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcat, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$33 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$38 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$42 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in US dollars only) extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
(Also open most Saturdays when someone is in.)

