

2 sweethearts found dead near Columbine High School

by Judith Graham
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LITTLETON, Colo. — This shell-shocked community awoke to another horror Monday, February 14: the slaying of two teens at a Subway sandwich shop in a strip mall only blocks from Columbine High School.

One victim, Nick Kunselman, 15, worked at the store; Stephanie Hart, 16, was his girlfriend. Both were sophomores at Columbine.

As teachers told stunned students of the deaths, some broke into sobs or became distraught.

"People are extremely upset. There is a sense of, 'Not again, not another senseless tragedy,'" said Rick Kaufman, spokesman for the Jefferson County School District.

Police said they received a call just after midnight from a Subway manager, who was driving by the shop and saw the lights on, long after the 10 p.m. closing time. She went inside and discovered the teens, dead from apparent gunshot wounds, according to the sheriff's office. The time of death has not been deter-

mined. Police were tracking information about a young white male, dressed in a red jacket and flared pants, who was seen leaving the area. They said there was a security monitor in the store but would not comment on whether a tape was recovered. Late Monday, Feb. 14, no suspect had been identified. Sheriff's office spokesman Steve Davis said authorities had not pinpointed a motive but had ruled out a murder-suicide.

Officials have assured school officials that the slayings are not related to the massacre by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold at Columbine High last April, which left 12 other students and one teacher dead.

But the feeling that there is some kind of connection, if only because of the violence, was shared by several people who spoke Monday, Feb. 14, of living under a cloud that casts a dark shadow over the community.

In the early afternoon that Monday, Beth Nimmo, whose daughter, Rachel Scott, was slain in the Columbine school shootings, stood in the large parking lot

across the street from the Subway. Rachel had worked in the shop, a popular hangout for high schoolers.

"It seems like lightning has

struck more than once here," said Nimmo. "It brings up a lot of pain and ugly memories."

Rachel's brother Craig survived the Columbine rampage by pretending to be dead on the library floor. After he heard of the most recent killings, he locked all the doors in the house and told his

mother they had to make sure his younger brother was safe.

"He was angry, furious, going around saying we have to do something," his mother said, add-



Columbine High School students Nicholas Kunselman, 15, and Stephanie Hart, 16, were found dead at a Subway shop near the school.

ing that Craig had come with her to the scene to leave flowers and a teddy bear for the teens who were killed.

In a tobacco shop across from the Subway, Tricia Chaudion fought tears. She had had to leave her job as a maintenance worker at Clement Park, next to Colum-

bine High, after the April shootings because she was so upset. "And now it's right in front of my face again," she whispered.

Jefferson County District Atty. Dave Thomas said investigators were exploring "every possible motive" for the double slaying but declined to give details.

"It's like it's never going to end, sometimes," he admitted. "It's one event after another in this community."

Littleton has struggled in the past several weeks with the killing of 11-year-old Ray Dalalos, who was found frozen and stuffed into a trash bin at a shopping center near Columbine High. Also, just before Christmas, *Time* magazine's report on chilling videotapes made by Harris and Klebold before their killing spree sent waves of distress through the area.

An Internet message from a Florida teen to a Columbine High student threatening to "finish the job" Harris and Klebold had begun, prompted authorities to close the school, and legal proceedings against the teen have received considerable media coverage in Littleton. In October, Carla

Hochhalter, mother of wounded student Anne Marie Hochhalter, fatally shot herself in a crowded Denver pawnshop.

Meanwhile, new details continue to emerge about the Columbine massacre. On Friday, a Columbine commission established by Colorado Gov. Bill Owens heard testimony from the Littleton Fire Department that Harris and Klebold had stockpiled 90 weapons, far more than previously disclosed, including 80 explosive devices in the school and ten at Harris' home.

Among them were 11, one-and-a-half-gallon propane containers, two duffel-bag bombs with 20-pound gas tanks, 27 pipe bombs, 48 carbon dioxide bombs, and seven devices with 40 or more gallons of flammable liquid, the fire department confirmed.

Both of the boys' cars were filled with large amounts of explosives set to go off at noon, when the boys calculated that students would be streaming out of the flaming cafeteria into the parking lot, fire department officials explained. Neither those nor many of the other bombs worked.

IRA pulls out of disarmament talks

by Fawn Vrazo
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LONDON — The Irish Republican Army pulled out of Northern Ireland disarmament talks Tuesday, February 15, plunging the peace process into deepening crisis as the British and Irish governments struggled to respond.

However, the IRA made no suggestion that it would end a cease-fire that has held since July 1997. In those 31 months, the paramilitary group has called off its decades-long attempt to force the British out of the province with guns and bombs.

The pullout from disarmament talks followed the suspension Friday, Feb. 11, of the province's new power-sharing government of Roman Catholics and Protestants. Britain suspended the nine-week-old government rather than risk a walkout by Protestant politicians angry that the IRA has made no move to turn in its illegal arsenal

of weapons, a goal in the 1998 Good Friday peace agreement.

The IRA move came on the eve of new talks between British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Irish counterpart, Bertie Ahern, leaving both leaders with no immediate way to rescue a peace process moving nearer and nearer to complete failure. In recent years, the British and Irish governments have cooperated closely in trying to find a way to end Catholic and Protestant bloodshed in Northern Ireland, the six-county province that came into being when Ireland was partitioned into an independent south and a British-controlled north in 1921.

An IRA statement issued late afternoon Tuesday, Feb. 15, said the outlawed group had agreed to talks with an independent disarmament commission only if other aspects of the peace agreement — including the new government — remained in place.

"Those who have made the political process conditional on the decommissioning of silenced IRA guns are

responsible for the current crisis in the peace process," the statement said.

The statement accused the British government of bowing to threats by the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), Northern Ireland's major Protestant political party.

Both the British government and UUP leadership "obviously have no desire to deal with the issue of arms except on their own terms," the statement said. "Those who seek a military victory in this way need to understand that this cannot and will not happen."

Not only was the IRA immediately ending its "engagement" with the independent disarmament commission headed by Canadian Gen. John de Chastelain, said the statement, but the group also was withdrawing all disarmament "propositions" made to the commission since talks began last November.

There was an angry reaction to the IRA pullout Tuesday night, Feb. 15, from UPP President David Trimble

"We have seen the republican movement squander the best opportunity they have had to date in order to resolve this issue. . . I wonder if they have any idea of the damage that is being done to the process."

The suspension of Northern Ireland's new government last week by Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Mandelson has produced new cracks in the cooperation between the British and Irish cooperation on Northern Ireland. Irish leaders had urged Britain not to suspend the Northern Ireland government, and instead to explore a last-minute proposal made last week by the IRA.

The Irish government lobbied strongly against suspension, arguing that any new IRA offer should be explored before Mandelson pulled the plug on a new government that brought together such diverse parties as the UUP, Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party of anti-Catholic hard-liner Ian Paisley.

Venezuela tries to rebuild region destroyed by floods

by Serge F. Kovaleski
The Washington Post
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CARMEN DE URIA, Venezuela — An unsettling silence, punctuated by wisps of wind, hangs over Carmen de Uria. Almost all signs of life have vanished. What was once a town is now a crater, strewn with boulders, mounds of dirt, crumpled cars, and annihilated homes.

The signs of destruction make a numbing testimonial to the ferocity with which flood waters, tumbling rock, and mudslides unleashed by last December's torrential rains cut a swath through Carmen de Uria from the nearby Avila mountain range.

Most of the town's 5,000 residents have moved to shelters or housing elsewhere, and at least 500 of their neighbors were killed in the catastrophe. But a handful remain, determined to rebuild, while others intermittently return to sift through the debris amid reminders of lives torn asunder: a shredded wicker rocking chair, a mangled bird cage, a bunk bed snapped in half.

"This was paradise, but you may as well stick a sign in the ground that says, 'The ghost town of Carmen de Uria,'" said Douglas Berrotera, 30, who recently came back to salvage belongings from a heap of concrete that used to be his house. "This is science fiction turned into reality. Our small corner of the world has disappeared and will never exist again. All we can do is hope for some sort of salvation."

Venezuelans are grappling with the enormity of the devastation caused by the nation's worst natural disaster in memory, which has made sparsely populated wastelands of numerous communities such as this one along the hard-hit northern Caribbean coast 25 miles northeast of Caracas, the capital.

As the cleanup grinds on, other towns throughout the region remain without electricity or telephone service and reliant on aid shipments of food and drinking water. Night-time looting is said to be spiraling out of control in certain areas as the number of troops providing public security has thinned from the initial days of the emergency. The government is spending approximately \$5 million a month to put up 14,000 families in shelters.

In the meantime, the government of President Hugo Chavez and local officials try to decide how to reconstruct what they have vowed will be a new and reconfigured Venezuela.

Although an accurate assessment of the death and destruction re-

mains elusive, authorities say 10,000 to 30,000 people were killed in several days of rain that began Dec. 15. Many of the victims were buried under mudslides or washed away by floods. About 150,000 people lost their homes. The cataclysm laid waste about 40,000 homes and destroyed or damaged roughly half the agricultural infrastructure.

Government officials, who will attend an international conference next week in Madrid to try to obtain more foreign assistance, estimate it would cost as much as \$30 billion to rebuild the devastated areas. Most of the money would go to this small state of Vargas. Home to Venezuela's largest commercial seaport and a once robust tourist industry, Vargas suffered the greatest toll in terms of loss of life and destruction to its towns, fishing communities, and vast neighborhoods of illegal mountainside shanties.

Since mid-December, the state's population has declined so precipitously — from about 380,000 to less than 250,000 — as a result of deaths from the storm and people leaving that government officials are considering reincorporating Vargas into the Federal District, which includes Caracas.

Some are concerned that Vargas may no longer be viable as a state. Furthermore, it may become smaller under an ambitious relocation initiative slowly being implemented by the President to ease a population glut on the Caribbean coast, where about 70 percent of the country's 23 million people live.

In the town of Los Corales, where rows of abandoned luxury apartment buildings are engulfed by banks of dried mud and a sea of boulders, the resolve to rebuild was captured in graffiti that declared, "VARGAS WILL NOT DIE."

For now, however, Los Corales remains desolate. Other than workers operating bulldozers and dump trucks, as well as some army troops, only an occasional resident can be seen plodding across what looks like a lunar landscape.

Some signs of normalcy, however, are gradually returning to less-devastated pockets of the state. In the coastal town of Naiguata, where about one-third of the population had left, a pharmacy, bakery, and grocery have reopened, and street vendors selling fruit and fish are starting to reemerge. Some residents are trickling back to town.

While optimistic that a new but different Vargas could reemerge within a decade as a hub for international and local tourism, as well as service industries, Gov. Alfredo Laya lamented, "Everything has changed here, forever."

Bin Laden may give control to his deputy

by Mohamad Bazzi
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NEW YORK — Osama bin Laden may be preparing to hand control of his terrorist network to one of his top lieutenants, several Islamists and analysts in the Middle East say.

The deputy, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, has lived with bin Laden in Afghanistan for three years and serves as his personal doctor. He stepped down last month as head of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the group that assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981 and later waged a violent campaign aimed at toppling the Egyptian government.

Al-Zawahiri's move coincided with reports in the Arabic press that bin Laden is ill and has difficulty performing daily tasks. That may be a cover story devised by bin Laden's inner circle so that he can take a back seat under growing American pressure, according to Islamists living in Europe and observers in Egypt.

Al-Zawahiri's possible ascendancy may not be good news for the United States, as he has a history of planning large terrorist operations, such as the 1995 bombing of the Egyptian Embassy in Pakistan.

Still, these developments reflect the success of U.S. intelligence agencies in squeezing bin Laden's network since the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in East Africa. One of bin Laden's key allies, the Jihad, suffered a major blow as dozens of its members were arrested around the world and extradited to Egypt. The crackdown caused internal divisions that led to Al-Zawahiri's resignation.

"This talk about bin Laden being sick might pave the way for Al-

Zawahiri to assume control, at least publicly," said Dina Rashwan, a senior researcher at the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo, Egypt, who closely monitors Islamic militants worldwide. "There could be a restructuring where Al-Zawahiri would have a place next to bin Laden or even above him."

Al-Zawahiri was indicted in New York last year along with bin Laden and 14 others in the U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and

establishing an Islamic state in Egypt to fighting a broader war against American interests. This global focus reflects bin Laden's influence on many Islamist groups.

"I don't believe that Ayman has given up on the principles of Islamic Jihad, but he has decided to focus on other struggles," said Yasser Al-Sirri, an Egyptian exile who has ties to the group and runs the Islamic Observation Center in London. "The Jihad is an idea. It's not just one man. The Jihad existed before Ayman, and it will continue to exist after him."

A spokesman for U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White, who is prosecuting the embassy bombings case, declined to comment, citing the ongoing investigation.

Although he has been Egypt's most wanted militant for years, Al-Zawahiri is largely unknown in the West. He became the *emir*, or prince, of Islamic Jihad in the early 1990s after serving as the group's military commander. Under his leadership, the Jihad carried out a series of high-profile attacks against Egyptian military and political leaders. Last year, he was sentenced to death in absentia by an Egyptian military court for organizing an insurgency against the government.

Al-Zawahiri, 48, fled from Egypt in the early 1980s, after he was sentenced to three years in prison for belonging to an outlawed group. He spent time in several European countries as well as Sudan and Afghanistan, where he first met bin Laden in the late 1980s. At the time, bin Laden, a multimillionaire Saudi dissident, helped train and finance a cadre of "Afghan Arabs," Islamist volunteers from across the Middle East who fought against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Many of them went on to fight in Bosnia,

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-Dina Rashwan, researcher at Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, Egypt

Tanzania, which left more than 200 dead and thousands injured. Analysts believe Al-Zawahiri would want to make a big splash if he took charge of bin Laden's network.

"It stands to reason that he would begin his legacy with spectacular attacks, like he did with the Jihad," Rashwan said.

Others noted that Al-Zawahiri's departure from the Jihad exposed simmering divisions within a group that in recent years has shifted from its original goal of