

"It was a horrific crime scene," says Lancaster District Attorney Donald Totaro of the carnage.

HEARTBREAK IN — A SMALL TOWN

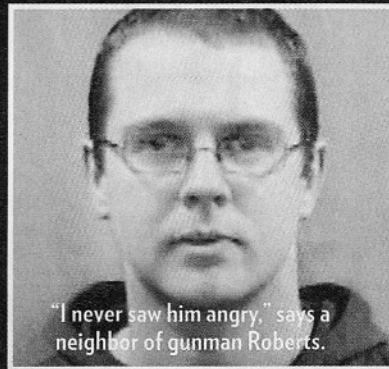
Amid a spate of school shootings, Charlie Roberts's chilling murder of five Amish girls stands alone for horror

KIN - TOWN

A red-haired little girl who liked gardening and reading, 8-year-old Rachel Ann Stoltzfus was blissfully unaware of most of the evils of the outside world. But when Charlie Roberts, 32, a troubled local truck driver, barged into her one-room Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pa., on the morning of Oct. 2, armed to the teeth and with a heart full of hate, young Rachel didn't flinch. Speaking in an even tone, Roberts ordered the children to lie down. He then began to tie up the 10 girls, ages 6 to 13, and ordered the 15 boys and four adults to leave. Rachel Ann's brothers John, 12, and Samuel, 6, who were among those who fled, were struck by their little sister's courage and composure. As their brother Melvin told PEOPLE, "Rachel Ann stayed very calm."

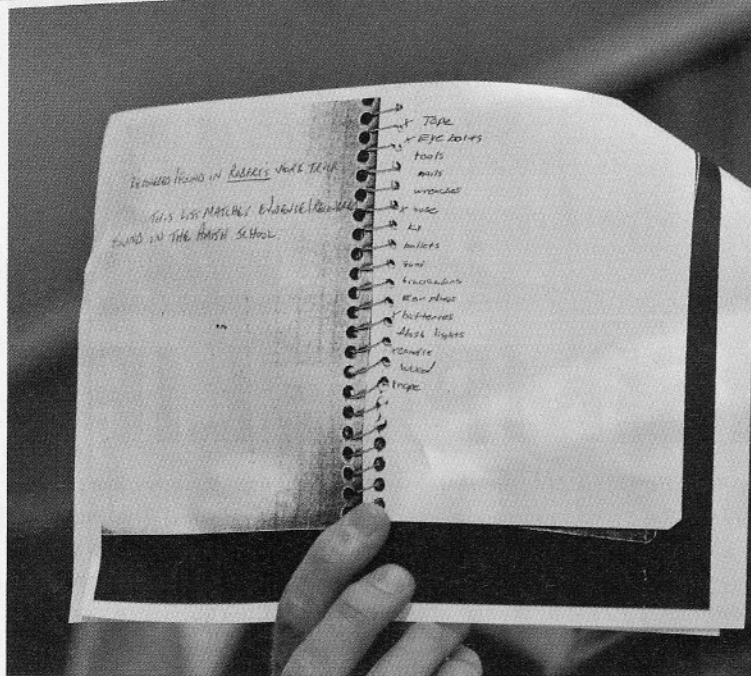
And the unimaginable happened. Forty-five minutes after entering the school, Roberts shot the 10 girls as they stood facing the chalkboard—a horrific act that left five of the girls dead and five others critically wounded—before turning his gun on himself. The senseless killings were only the latest in a rash of school shootings around the country (see box, page 67). Still, the cold brutality in a one-room schoolhouse in rural Pennsylvania, in a community dedicated to simplicity and peace, seemed to take shock to a new, numbing level. "In my career I've never seen anything like this," Pennsylvania State Police

FROM LEFT: BRADLEY C. BOYER/REUTERS; MARY ALTAFFER/AP; PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE/AP

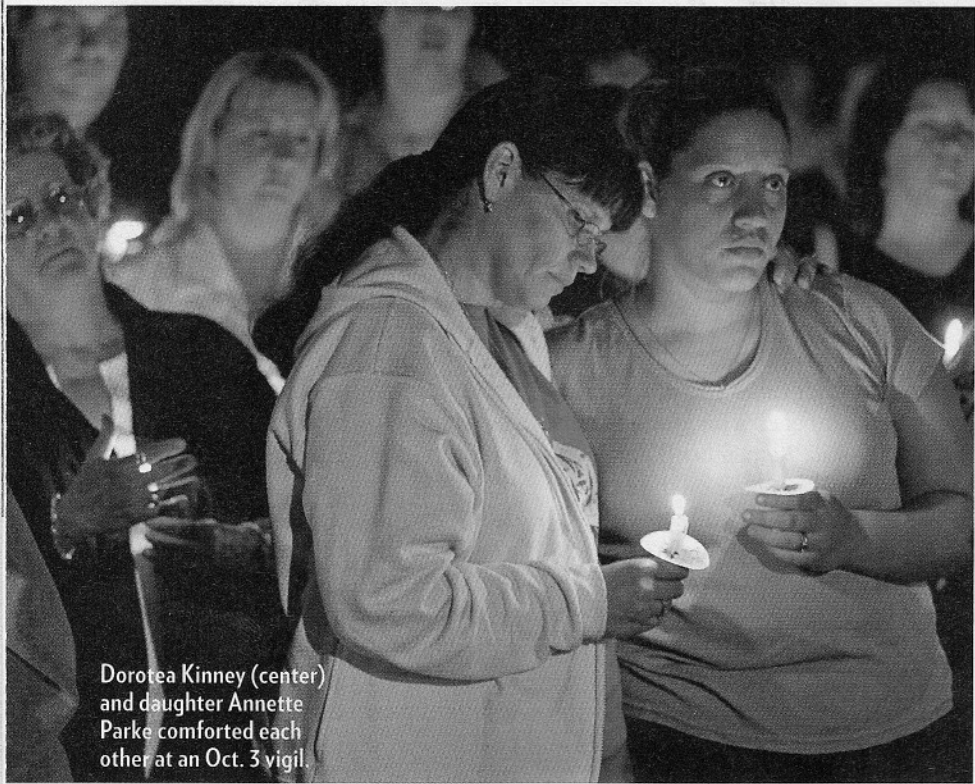


"I never saw him angry," says a neighbor of gunman Roberts.

I am not worthy of you,
 you are the perfect wife
 you deserve so much better
 We had so many good memories
 together as well as the ~~tragedy~~
 tragedy with Elise. It changed
 my life forever I haven't been
 the same since it affected
 me in a way I never felt
 possible. I am filled with so
 much hate, hate toward myself
 hate towards God and



State Police Commissioner Jeffrey Miller displayed Roberts's checklist of supplies for the attack; above, the suicide note.



Dorotea Kinney (center) and daughter Annette Parke comforted each other at an Oct. 3 vigil.

“ [The Amish] are stoic. But we fell into each other's arms and cried. They're as human as anyone else”

there was no phone at the school, in keeping with Amish custom, which shuns most modern conveniences (see box, page 65).

Meanwhile, Roberts was busy nailing lumber that he had brought with him across the doors as a barricade. Various items he carried in a bucket, including personal lubricant, suggested he had planned to molest the girls, as had happened in the Colorado attack. Police surrounded the building and tried to initiate negotiations. Roberts called his wife, who told police she could hear no sounds in the background. “We believe at this point that the kids were just quietly standing there,” said Commissioner Miller. Roberts called Lancaster county 911,

demanding the police back off. A moment later police heard shots and stormed the school, but it was too late. The wounded girls ranged in age from 6 to 13; the dead were 7 to 13. "He had no intention of coming out of there alive," said Miller. "He planned this out meticulously."

The attack shattered the tranquility of the Amish community, where many of the men work in farming or the making of small crafts. Because of the lack of television and telephones inside homes it took authorities hours to track down the parents of students in the school. But when many of the Amish elders heard the news, their normal reserve broke down. "They are stoic," says Dwilyn Beiler, a local resident with close ties to the Amish who visited the family of two of the victims with his wife. "But we fell into each other's arms and cried. They're as human as anyone else."

And they are also generous of spirit. At an evening vigil on Oct. 3 the pastor for the Roberts family appeared and told how one Amish neighbor had already gone to the killer's parents and offered forgiveness for the shooting. In a statement, the parents, Chuck and Terry Roberts, declared, "Our hearts are torn and anguished at the tragedy and loss we have experienced as a family and in the Amish community."

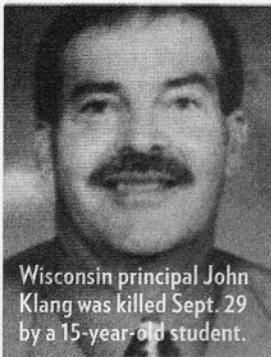
Outside the home of Rachel Ann Stoltzfus, her brother Raymond, 14, attired in traditional overalls and wide-brimmed straw hat, watched over two of their younger siblings, Emma, 4, and David, 2. His parents, Daniel and Annie, were at the hospital watching over Rachel Ann. Raymond was pulling for his sister, who, he explained, "likes to play dolls and stuff." Now she was struggling to pull through, with a shattered jaw and wounds in her shoulder and side. Looking out over the fields, Raymond could still not comprehend how little children could be shot in cold blood. "I just can't see why that man thought he had to do this," he says. "Did he know what he was doing, or what?"

By **Bill Hewitt**, **Nina Burleigh**, **Kathy Ehrich Dowd**, **Nicole Weisensee Egan**, **Mary Green** and **Sean Scully** in Pennsylvania, **Steve Erwin** in New York City and **Kelly Williams** in Chicago

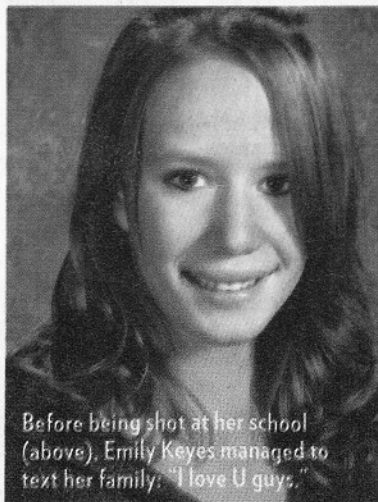


'THE WORST YEAR'

Prior to last week's carnage in Pennsylvania, the 2006 school-year tally was already startlingly high nationwide: seven fatal shootings, 17 non-fatal shootings. "This is already the worst year for school shootings in history," says former California police officer Jared Lewis, author of the upcoming book *Profiling the School Shooter*. Lewis and other experts stress that the best hope for preventing further



Wisconsin principal John Klang was killed Sept. 29 by a 15-year-old student.



Before being shot at her school (above), Emily Keyes managed to text her family: "I love U guys."

violence is to train students to be alert to odd student behavior and strangers—and to report anything that strikes them as suspicious. On Sept. 27, in Bailey, Colo., 53-year-old Duane Morrison took six girls hostage, sexually molested some of them, then murdered 16-year-old Emily Keyes. Beforehand, says retired FBI profiler Clint Van Zandt, "students saw the shooter sitting in his Jeep in the school parking lot drinking." Yet they didn't inform school authorities. Students have to be taught to become even "more responsible for their own safety," says Van Zandt.