

April 6 edition of *Newsweek*.) Only the Arkansas newspaper chose not to publish it.

Two new themes related to the incident were taken up on this day and reappeared in subsequent coverage as well: whether the Arkansas juvenile-crime code was up to the task of adequately rendering justice in this case and how the news media handled the first day of coverage of the story.

As the newspaper of record in the state capital, the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* featured no fewer than five different articles on the legal issues surrounding the case. *The New York Times* and *The Commercial Appeal* also ran stories on the topic.

With regard to the theme of media coverage, the *Times* and the *Democrat-Gazette* approached it from decidedly different angles. Media critic Walter Goodman's focus in the *Times* was on the wall-to-wall yet content-starved coverage of the tragedy on the 24-hour news channels. As the news programs kept searching for and usually not finding new information to report, he noted that nevertheless, "the tabloid headlines [were] ready: 'Murder in the Schoolyard.' 'Are Our Children Safe?'"

Interestingly, the page on which Goodman's column appeared bore a page label that incorporated a quotation attributed to one of the suspects: "Bloodshed In a Schoolyard: 'A Lot of Killing to Do.'"

The *Democrat-Gazette* focused not on the content of the journalism but on the journalists themselves, who descended on Westside Middle School "from as far away as Sweden, London and Norway."

It also was on the second day of coverage that anguished editorials appeared in the newspapers, each preoccupied with trying to find answers to previously unimaginable questions.

Coverage on subsequent days

Coverage of the Westside shootings continued well into April in both *The Commercial Appeal* and the *Democrat-Gazette*, though many of the pieces that appeared in the Memphis newspaper were from The Associated Press or syndicated columnists. At the *Democrat-Gazette*, several reporters continued to file stories on the shootings through the middle of the month.

The shootings remained a front-page story throughout the weekend in *The New York Times* (and Friday in *USA TODAY*'s weekend edition). On Sunday, the *Times* devoted more than a full page to a magazine-style recap of the tragedy, and published a thoughtful "Week in Review" piece by Peter Applebome analyzing the tendency to rush to judgment on the causes and meanings of events like these.

"Many people are skeptical about putting concise meanings on very complex events," wrote Applebome. "Thus,

Wednesday, March 25

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL
Memphis, Tennessee, Wednesday, March 25, 1992 \$2.00

Ambush at school kills 5

2 boys fire at classmates near Jonesboro; 11 wounded



'They thought it was a play' — but it wasn't

At Westside Middle School, the scene was chaotic. Police officers were seen running through the schoolyard, some carrying children in their arms. A person was being wheeled in a wheelchair. The atmosphere was one of panic and confusion. The incident, which occurred on Tuesday, March 24, resulted in the deaths of five students and injuries to 11 others. The school was closed for several days following the tragedy.

Heavy viewers of boob tube often chubby children

A study by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, has found that children who watch a lot of television are more likely to be overweight. The study, which involved over 1,000 children, found that for every hour a child spends watching TV, they gain an additional 3.7 pounds. The researchers suggest that the sedentary nature of television viewing, combined with the high-calorie snacks often consumed while watching, contributes to childhood obesity.

President laments slavery, America's neglect of Africa

In a speech to Congress, President George H.W. Bush expressed his sorrow over the legacy of slavery and the ongoing challenges faced by the continent of Africa. He called for increased international cooperation and aid to help address the economic and social issues plaguing the region. The President emphasized the importance of human rights and the need for a more just and equitable world.

Wednesday, March 25

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Little Rock, Wednesday, March 25, 1992 \$2.00

5 dead at Jonesboro

Two camouflage-clad boys arrested in schoolyard shootings



Did suspects spell trouble? Opinions split

The two boys arrested in connection with the Jonesboro schoolyard shootings are being held in custody. Law enforcement officials are working to identify other potential suspects and gather more evidence. The incident has sparked a national debate about gun control and the safety of schools. Opinions are split on whether the suspects' actions were a result of mental health issues or a desire for notoriety.

'I never dreamed it would happen here'

Police officers who responded to the shooting at Westside Middle School expressed their shock and disbelief. One officer stated, "I never dreamed it would happen here. This is a peaceful neighborhood, and we didn't expect anything like this to occur." The community is in a state of mourning, and the school remains closed.

Privilege claim kindles debate, GOP rebuke

A statement by a GOP official regarding the incident has sparked a debate about privilege and its role in society. The official's remarks were seen as insensitive and have been widely criticized. The debate centers on whether certain groups of people are more likely to engage in violent acts due to their social status or access to resources.

Federal highway bill giving Arkansas 35% more clears House committee

A federal highway bill that allocates an additional 35% of funding to Arkansas has passed the House of Representatives. The bill is part of a larger infrastructure package aimed at improving roads and transportation across the country. Arkansas officials are pleased with the increased funding, which will be used for various highway projects and maintenance work.

when asked the inevitable — 'Why?' — Karen Curtner, the principal of Westside responded, 'That is a hard question, and I don't think there is an answer out there that we are looking for.' Applebome's article should be required reading for all journalists. (See p. 27 for a reprint of the Applebome article.)

As a new week began (March 30), Jonesboro had moved to Page 3A in *USA TODAY* and had fallen off *The New York Times*' news pages. There was, however, a lively exchange of opinions in the "Letters" sections of both newspapers that continued for several days, especially in response to a March 26 *USA TODAY* article ("Warning signals were simply seen as boyhood bravado"), which asserted that the schoolyard assault was "sparking a debate about whether elements of Southern culture, in which the use of guns is a male rite of passage, have contributed to the violence."

Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report

Not surprisingly, given the oddity of such youthful perpetrators in the Westside ambush, both *Time* and *Newsweek* featured cover stories on Andrew Golden and Mitchell Johnson in their April 6 issues. *U.S. News & World Report* went with a planned cover story on spy submarines.

Time ran the headline "Armed & Dangerous" over a photo of a grinning Golden as a toddler holding a rifle. *Newsweek*'s cover featured a photo of an older Golden (apparently taken within the past year or so) holding a large revolver, over the