



## **Milk Driver Kills 3 at Amish Schoolhouse Milk-truck driver storms Amish schoolhouse and opens fire, killing three girls, then himself**

By MARK SCOLFORO

A milk-truck driver carrying two guns and a grudge stormed a one-room Amish schoolhouse Monday, sent the boys and adults outside, barricaded the doors with two-by-fours, and then opened fire on a dozen girls, killing three of them before committing suicide.

It was the nation's third deadly school shooting in less than a week, and it sent shock waves through Lancaster County's bucolic Amish country, a picturesque landscape of horse-drawn buggies, green pastures and neat-as-a-pin farms, where violent crime is virtually nonexistent.

Seven other victims were taken to hospitals. Most were badly wounded; most had been shot, execution-style, at point-blank range, after being lined up along the chalkboard, their feet bound with wire and plastic ties, authorities said.

"This is a horrendous, horrific incident for the Amish community. They're solid citizens in the community. They're good people. They don't deserve ... no one deserves this," State Police Commissioner Jeffrey B. Miller said.

The attack bore similarities to a deadly school shooting last week in Bailey, Colo., and authorities there raised the possibility that the Pennsylvania attack was a copycat crime.

The gunman, Charles Carl Roberts IV, a 31-year-old truck driver from the nearby town of Bart, was bent on killing young girls as a way of "acting out in revenge for something that happened 20 years ago," Miller said. Miller gave no details on what the grudge was.

Roberts was not Amish and apparently had nothing against the Amish community, Miller said. Instead, Miller said, he apparently picked the school because it was close by, there were girls there, and it had little or no security.

Roberts had left several rambling notes to his wife and three children that Miller said were "along the lines of suicide notes." The gunman also called his wife during the siege by cell phone to tell her he was getting even for a long-ago offense, according to Miller.

As rescue workers and investigators tromped over the surrounding farmland, looking for evidence around this tiny village about 55 miles west of Philadelphia, dozens of people in traditional plain Amish clothing watched \_ the men in light-colored shirts, dark pants and broad-brimmed straw farmer's hats, the women in bonnets and long dark dresses.

Reporters were kept away from the school after the shooting, and the Amish were reluctant to speak with the media, as is their custom.

The victims were members of the Old Order Amish. Lancaster County is home to some 20,000 Old Order Amish, who eschew automobiles, electricity, computers, fancy clothes and most other modern conveniences, live among their own people, and typically speak a German dialect known as Pennsylvania Dutch.

Bob Allen, a clerk at a bookstore in the Amish country tourist town of Intercourse, said residents see the area as being safe and the Amish as peaceful people. "It just goes to show there's no safe place. There's really no such thing," he said.

The shooting took place at the one-room West Nickel Mines Amish School, a neat white building set amid green fields, with a square white horse fence around the schoolyard. The school had about 25 to 30 students, ages 6 to 13.

According to investigators, Roberts dropped his children off at the school bus stop, backed his truck up to the Amish school, unloaded a shotgun, an automatic handgun and several pieces of lumber, and walked in around 10 a.m. He released about 15 boys, a pregnant woman and three women with babies, Miller said.

He barricaded the doors with two-by-fours, two-by-sixes and piled-up desks, made the remaining girls line up along a blackboard, and tied their feet together with wire ties and flexible plastic ties, Miller said.

The teacher and another adult at the school fled to a farmhouse nearby, and someone there called 911 to report a gunman holding students hostage.

Roberts apparently called his wife around 11 a.m., saying he was taking revenge for an old grudge, Miller said. Moments later, Roberts told a dispatcher he would open fire on the children if police didn't back away from the building. Within seconds, troopers heard gunfire. They smashed the windows to get inside, and found his body.

Miller said he had immediate evidence that the victims were sexually assaulted.

The names and ages of the dead were not immediately released.

"Very, very traumatic situation. Some of my troopers, actually one of the girls died in the arms of one of our troopers," Miller said.

Three girls 13, 8 and 6 were in critical condition at the Penn State Children's Hospital in Hershey. The rest of the wounded were taken to other hospitals in Pennsylvania and Delaware; their condition was not immediately disclosed.

No one answered the door at Roberts' small, one-story home on Tuesday afternoon. Children's toys were strewn on the porch and in the yard.

The shootings were disturbingly similar to an attack last week at Platte Canyon High School in Bailey, Colo., where a man singled out several girls as hostages in a school classroom and then killed one of them and himself. Authorities said the man in Colorado sexually molested the girls.

"If this is some kind of a copycat, it's horrible and of concern to everybody, all law enforcement," said Monte Gore, undersheriff of Park County, Colo. "On behalf of Park County and our citizens and our sheriff's office, our hearts go out to that school and the community."

**William Pollack**, an expert in school violence at **McLean Hospital** in Belmont, Mass., and a psychology professor at the Harvard Medical School, said the Pennsylvania attack probably wasn't a copycat crime. Instead, Roberts probably had a grudge against women or girls that had been building for months or years, and he was spurred to act by the Colorado shootings.

"Seeing someone else enact it, certainly that would open up the gates," Pollack said.

On Friday, a school principal was shot to death in Cazenovia, Wis. A 15-year-old student, described as upset over a reprimand, was charged with murder.

The Pennsylvania attack was the deadliest school shooting since a teenager went on a rampage last year on an Indian reservation in Red Lake, Minn., killing 10 people in all, including five students, a teacher, a security guard and himself.

Nationwide, the 1999 Columbine High School massacre in Littleton, Colo., remains the deadliest school shooting, with 15 dead, including the two teenage gunmen.

In Pennsylvania's insular Amish country, the outer world has intruded on occasion. In 1999, two Amish men were sent to jail for buying cocaine from a motorcycle gang and selling it to young people in their community.

There were four murders in Lancaster County in 2005, including the killings of a non-Amish couple were shot to death in their Lititz home in November by their daughter's 18-year-old boyfriend.

Kenneth Trump, president of the National School Safety and Security Services consulting firm in Cleveland, said the Colorado and Pennsylvania crimes underscore the lesson that no school is automatically safe from an attack.

"These incidents can happen to a one-classroom schoolhouse to a large urban school," he said. "The only thing that scares me more than an armed intruder in a school is school and safety officials who believe it can't happen here."

He said that belief is often stronger in rural, suburban and private schools.

"When you go to rural and private schools, the first obstacle you run into is the 'It can't happen here' mentality," he said. "People have the perception of we're not like whatever big city they're near."