

= Platte Canyon High School hostage crisis =

The Platte Canyon High School hostage crisis was an incident of a hostage taking and shooting that occurred at Platte Canyon High School in Bailey , Colorado , on September 27 , 2006 . The gunman , 53 @-@ year @-@ old Duane Roger Morrison , took six female students hostage and sexually assaulted them , later releasing four . When police broke open the classroom 's door with explosives , Morrison opened fire with a semiautomatic pistol before shooting hostage Emily Keyes in the head . The other remaining hostages escaped unharmed , and paramedics confirmed that Morrison had committed suicide shortly before police were able to enter the classroom . Keyes was pronounced dead at 4 : 32 p.m. MDT (23 : 32 UTC) at Saint Anthony 's Hospital in Denver , Colorado after undergoing emergency surgery .

= Details =

= = Entry and hostage @-@ taking = =

Note : All times are in Mountain Daylight Time , UTC @-@ 6

At about 11 : 40 a.m. , Morrison entered the school carrying a .40 S & W caliber Glock 22 pistol , a Smith & Wesson .357 @-@ caliber revolver (which wasn 't used during the incident) , and a backpack , which he claimed contained " three pounds of C @-@ 4 " . A search of the backpack later recovered duct tape , handcuffs , knives , a stun gun , rope , scissors , massage oil , sex toys , and numerous rounds of ammunition , but no explosives .

A sixteen @-@ year @-@ old student named Katrina Keller reportedly saw Morrison entering the school before the time specified by police . She stated that she had been walking past a vacant classroom and saw a man inside wearing a hooded sweatshirt , apparently angry . Keller did not report the incident to the school office . Other students reported that they witnessed Morrison sitting in a yellow Jeep in the school parking lot at around 10 : 45 a.m. , almost an hour before he entered the school . Morrison was believed to have been living in the car , camping out near Bailey . Videos taken from security cameras outside show that Morrison was in his Jeep for at least 20 minutes , mingling with students as classes changed , 35 minutes before the siege began . Earlier , Morrison had spoken to a male high school student that day and " asked about the identity of a list of female students . "

Morrison entered a classroom on the second floor , room 206 , where teacher Sandra Smith taught Honors English . When Smith asked him what he was doing in the classroom , he pulled out his handgun and ordered her , all of the male students , and several female students to leave . He then fired one shot into the air after Smith tried to speak to him again . After Smith and the male students left the classroom , Morrison instructed the seven remaining students to stand facing the chalkboard . He later released one student at approximately 12 : 15 p.m. , before law enforcement arrived at the scene .

Park County sheriff Fred Wegener (whose son was in the school building at the time of the incident) informed the media that all seven girls were molested , though he did not know " how much or to what degree . " Lynna Long , a 15 @-@ year @-@ old sophomore and one of the seven hostages , stated that Morrison lined the girls up facing a chalkboard and then sexually assaulted all of them ; Long stated that she knew that the other hostages were being molested because of " the rustling of clothes and elastic being snapped and zippers being opened and closed . " During the sexual assaults , Morrison reportedly held his gun to the hostages ' heads and threatened to kill them if they did not cooperate . According to the first hostage released , Morrison would systematically take individual hostages from the blackboard and further into the interior of the classroom before sexually assaulting them .

= = Negotiations and evacuations = =

A " code white " alert was sounded over the intercom and students were instructed to remain in their classrooms . Negotiations with Morrison began with the goal of allowing the six remaining hostages in the room to be released . Initially , he directly spoke to deputies in the hallway while holding one of the hostages at gunpoint , but later spoke via telephone and used the student hostages as relayers between the negotiators and himself , as he did not want to speak directly with officials . After four of the six girls were released between the hours of 12 : 35 p.m. and 1 : 45 p.m. , negotiators heightened the intensity of their indirect discussions with Morrison . During this time , 16 @-@ year @-@ old junior Emily Keyes , one of the two remaining hostages , managed to send her family a brief text message stating , " I love u guys " in response to a text message (" R U OK ? ") her father , John @-@ Michael Keyes , had sent using his cell phone after receiving word that an incident was occurring at the high school . When Keyes ' father sent the message " Where are you ? " , he received no response .

A total of 800 students from both Platte Canyon High School and the nearby Fitzsimmons Middle School were rapidly evacuated . Morrison 's demands were unknown , although police confirmed that his primary concern was a request for the police to back away . All students , except the hostages , were safely evacuated by 12 : 10 p.m. and by 3 : 00 p.m. all had been taken to Deer Creek Elementary School . Parents were able to gain little information from authorities , who remained silent regarding the issue while the crisis continued .

= = = Shooting = = =

By the time the four student hostages were released , a bomb squad , SWAT team from Jefferson County , and agents from the Bureau of Alcohol , Tobacco , Firearms and Explosives were sent to the scene . Ambulances parked in the end zone of the high school 's football field . A 4 @-@ mile (6 km) stretch of U.S. Route 285 was closed . At approximately 3 : 32 p.m. , negotiations began to stall . Morrison later explicitly stated that he would stop negotiating at 4 : 00 p.m.

Wegener said that police had chosen to storm the second @-@ floor classroom after the man ended negotiations , stating that " something would happen at 4 p.m. " SWAT team members witnessed Morrison assaulting the girls , and Wegener made the decision to save the hostages by force , stating later , " My decision was either wait ? [and have the] possibility of having two dead hostages or act and try to save what I feared he would do to them Because I 'd want whoever was in my position to do the same thing , and that is to save lives . "

The police burst through the door at approximately 3 : 45 p.m. and encountered Morrison and the hostages behind a barricade of desks at a far wall . After using the hostages as human shields against the Jefferson County SWAT team , Morrison shot at the policemen , and then at Emily Keyes , who was trying to run . Morrison shot and critically wounded himself soon thereafter , simultaneously being shot by police , and died at the scene at 3 : 57 p.m. Keyes was taken by helicopter to a hospital in Denver , where she was pronounced dead at 4 : 32 p.m. The other hostage survived with no physical injuries . Investigators found no sign of explosives in the man 's backpack , but three additional firearms were recovered outside the school campus : a Colt AR @-@ 15 assault rifle found in a clearing adjacent to a river about a mile north of the school , a Browning bolt @-@ action rifle found north of the campus near U.S. Route 285 , and a Smith & Wesson .44 @-@ caliber revolver found south of the school near a hiking trail .

The coroner of Park County , Sharon Morris , confirmed that the body of Morrison (which had four bullet wounds , three non @-@ fatal from police and one fatal shot from his own gun) was still in the second @-@ floor classroom as of 6 : 00 p.m. An autopsy report later revealed that Morrison suffered two gunshot wounds to the head (including the fatal one fired from his gun) , two additional in the right shoulder , and a graze wound to his right hand , while Emily Keyes died of a single gunshot wound to the right side of her head . District officials stated that both the high school and Fitzsimmons Middle School would be closed for September 28 and September 29 ; a counseling center set up at a local church would open at 7 : 00 a.m. for students .

= = The perpetrator = =

Duane Roger Morrison (July 23 , 1953 ? September 27 , 2006) was eventually identified as the perpetrator of the incident . He was unemployed at the time of the hostage crisis , and had no known connection to Platte Canyon High School or any of the hostages . Initial reports of the gunman described him as a bearded 35 @-@ year @-@ old man with a camouflage backpack and a black hooded sweatshirt . Morrison had been imprisoned in 1973 for larceny and possession of marijuana , and was arrested on a separate occasion for obstructing police in Littleton , Colorado . Police announced that a suicide letter written by Morrison to a family member was being analyzed by the FBI . Morrison 's family gave the letter to police , who then submitted the document to the FBI Behavioral Unit in Quantico , Virginia . In the 14 @-@ page letter , Morrison claimed that he was mentally and physically abused by his father as a child , and had suicidal thoughts since he was 21 years old .

On August 15 , 2006 , about one month prior to the shooting , he pleaded guilty to harassment after leaving a voice message to a local Harley @-@ Davidson dealership on November 22 , 2004 , after receiving a promotional catalog in his mail ; the message contained profanities and a threat to visit their headquarters with an assault rifle . Prior to that , he phoned a similar threatening call . An investigation found that Morrison had purchased a motorcycle from the dealership , but became " extremely dissatisfied " after not receiving certain aftermarket accessories and services promised in his contract , and the dealership reportedly never made any attempt to resolve the dispute . His suicide letter later mentioned the purchase , in which he vaguely claimed that " the matter wasn 't over " . On May 31 , 2005 , Morrison filed a report claiming that fifteen of his firearms were stolen from his residence , and later gained \$ 10 @,@ 000 from a fictitious insurance claim initiated after the stolen firearms report . Four of the firearms mentioned in his report were among those recovered on or around the school campus ; the whereabouts of the remaining 11 firearms currently remain unknown .

= = Aftermath = =

Platte Canyon High School reopened a week after the shooting on October 5 . Memorials had been erected along the highway leading to the school that carried messages such as " Be Strong " and " Random Acts of Kindness " . A number of students prayed in front of the school before the day began and students were given donated teddy bears as they left . Fifty counselors were present during the day for students . Superintendent Dr. James Walpole noted that of 460 high school students , only 10 were absent .

The service for Emily Keyes was held on September 30 , the day that Governor Bill Owens later declared " Emily Keyes Day " . About 5 @,@ 000 motorcyclists took part in the " Columbine to Canyon Ride " , which occurred in memory of the victims of both the Columbine and Platte Canyon shootings . The procession of motorcycles was so long that the first to get to Platte Canyon High School arrived as the final motorcyclists departed from Columbine High School , two riding alongside each other .

The efforts initiated toward increased school security had come to a standstill several years after the Columbine High School massacre as federal and state funding toward safety was cut in favor of higher test scores . Although an increase in communication with law enforcement was evident in the Platte Canyon High School shooting , Del Elliot of the University of Colorado noted that " [the vast majority of school districts] are so totally absorbed with CSAP and academic requirements that they aren 't spending a lot of time and resources on this issue " .

By October 11 , investigators had conducted 124 interviews and had found 174 pieces of evidence related to the case . They were also investigating the West Nickel Mines School shooting in Pennsylvania , which had occurred five days after the shooting in Bailey . As a result of the September 27 incident , Platte Canyon High School increased its security , leaving only one school entrance unlocked . It plans to install more security cameras . Park County Sheriff Fred Wegener proposed having a guard there during the school day , but he stated that that particular suggestion was outside the current budget .

