

Sandy Hook - Part 1

December 14, 2012: “Gracie, wake up. Time to get ready for school.” Lynn opened the drapes in her daughter’s room, allowing bright sunlight to flood the bedroom. The blonde 7-year-old cranked her eyelids half open and rolled out of bed. An “Ow” escaped Gracie’s lips when she bumped her leg into the play table that held her paper and colored pencils. Gracie loved to draw, especially peace signs, ice cream cones, and the seagulls she saw when the family vacationed at Martha’s Vineyard.

“Careful sweetie,” Lynn said, a reflexive comment, driven by a mother’s instinct to forever protect her child.

Gracie cleaned up in the bathroom and, per habit, stretched her finger over the sink to draw on the bathroom mirror, still fogged from her mother’s hot shower. Usually, her finger etched a peace sign into the tiny water droplets on the mirror, but today she wrote “Grace loves Mommy.”

Back in Gracie’s bedroom, Lynn helped her get dressed in warm clothes for the cooler weather. And, as always, clipped Gracie’s trademark bubble-gum pink bow into her blond hair, holding her shoulder length locks in place for the school day. After breakfast, at the front closet, Lynn zipped up Gracie’s coat, then they walked to the bus stop.

The doors of the bus opened, and Lynn and the driver exchanged waves. Lowering herself to Gracie’s height, she hugged her daughter, and told her to have a fun day at school. Then she spun Gracie around and watched her only daughter join the other children on the packed bus. Gracie, beaming, blew kisses from her seat as the bus pulled from the stop. Lynn remembered that bus carrying her only daughter disappearing down the street and out of site for the last time.

At the front entrance to the school, the bus door flung open, and the children piled out in the joyful way only first and second graders can. As Gracie and her fellow students settled into class, the driver parked the empty bus.

The same morning that Gracie prepared for school, twenty-year-old Adam rose from bed and prepared for his day as well. The light of daybreak never shined in Adam's room because he taped black plastic garbage bags over the windows. He walked quietly to the bathroom, as his mother was sound asleep in her bedroom across the hall. After a shower, Adam squeezed a strip of toothpaste onto his toothbrush, then, using the palm of his hand, wiped the fog from the mirror above the sink to see his teeth. He stared at his reflection in the mirror and thought about his plans for the day.

His first task: get dressed. Back in his bedroom, Adam pulled a black T-shirt over his head followed by a black polo -style short sleeve shirt. He slipped into black cargo pants, then pulled a black canvas belt around his narrow waist, cinching it hard at the buckle. He laced black sneakers over black socks. Next, he put on a pale green utility vest, slipped sunglasses into one of its pockets, then gently pushed yellow plugs into his ears. Finally, he positioned a black Boonie hat just right on his head and completed the ensemble with black fingerless gloves.

Adam's second task of the day: say goodbye to his mother. With measured toe-to-heel steps, so as not to wake his still sleeping mother, Adam crossed the hall to her bedroom. To avoid the sounds of creaky hinges, using his left hand he applied a slow, deliberate push, to open the bedroom door. Silent as a shadow, he crept next to his mother's bed.

Adam listened to the rhythm of his mother's steady, gentle breathing as she slept. Perhaps, he reflected on how she had tried to protect him over the years. How she researched

treatments for his Asperger's Syndrome and, to combat his isolation, moved to new places for fresh starts. As part of her divorce settlement, Adam's mother insisted that he live with her full time so she could provide all the special care he needed. Maybe he thought about the target shooting they did together. She felt handling guns would instill a sense of responsibility within him and had a collection of firearms stored at the house. If Adam did reflect on his mother's protective instincts that day, those thoughts did not conquer the demons nesting in his head.

Adam raised the 22-caliber Savage Mark II rifle he had carried to the bedroom in his right hand up to his eye, aimed, then shot his mother four times in the head.

Adam's third task of the day: prepare for school. The careful planning he did for that day, though, needed to be kept secret from the inevitable probing eyes. Back in his bedroom, he disassembled his computer, removed the hard drive, and smashed it to bits with a hammer. Then, he strapped a camouflage holster to his right thigh and placed a 10mm Glock handgun into it. He tucked a 9mm Sig Sauer pistol in his belt, filled his utility pockets with ten 30 round magazines, then retrieved a Bushmaster XM15-E2S semi-automatic rifle from the gun safe. Hopping in his mother's car, he left his house for the last time.

Adam arrived at school at 9:35 AM on December 14, 2012. As he walked toward the building, he passed the empty bus that had taken Gracie McDonnell and the other children to school thirty minutes earlier. Gracie, with thirteen of her classmates, sat in Ms. Lauren Rousseau's 1st-grade classroom and next door was Ms. Victoria Soto's 1st-grade class with six students. The first lesson of the day was in progress.

Adam Lanza's shadow appeared on the brick wall that led to the school's front entrance and moved with each step under the words "Sandy Hook Elementary" printed in big black letters

on the bricks. He paused at the front entrance, then raised the Bushmaster XM15-E2S semi-automatic rifle and shot through the security door.

Hearing the gunfire and shattering glass, the principal and school psychologist rushed into the hallway. A hail of bullets shredded their bodies. Adam then burst into Ms. Rousseau's classroom and shot her and each child dead. Next, he moved into Ms. Soto's classroom. The brave young teacher had hidden the children in places throughout the classroom and told the killer her students were in assembly down the hall. When Adam executed Ms. Soto, the terrified children ran from their hiding spots. Adam picked each child off one at a time, their small bodies riddled with bullet holes. He also killed a special education teacher and the school's newly hired behavioral therapist.

During the nine-minute-long massacre, 153 rounds exited the gunman's semi-automatic rifle. The 154th round came from the 10mm Glock Adam pulled from his thigh holster as police advanced.

That bullet blew a hole through Adam Lanza's skull.