

How a paranoid becomes a mass murderer

By Dennis P. Sugrue
special writer

McDonald and the Happy Meal.

The UPI photo was chilling. In the background the land of the golden arches, the place where families often culminate a day of enjoyable activities at the beach, the zoo, or the ball field.

In the foreground, a young boy who could not be more than 9 or 10, lifeless, entangled with his minibebe. He and 20 other children and adults lost their lives in a shocking orgy of violence that shattered the image of a happy fantasy land normally inhabited by Ronald

CONTEMPORARY society has desensitized us to senseless killing. Terrorist attacks, drug-related massacres, even sex-related chain murders have become so common that they no longer shock and sicken us unless they happen to touch very close to home.

Yet when James Oliver Huberty walked into the San Diego McDonald restaurant and methodically fired round after round into scores of victims, most of us were indeed shocked and sickened despite our acquired psychological immunity to violence.



psychology
Dennis Sugrue

How could one human being perform such an incredible atrocity?

In some cases of mass murder, the autopsy of the killer has revealed the presence of a brain lesion. There have been a limited number of reports in the

psychological literature describing homicidal frenzies caused by drugs such as LSD or amphetamines.

However, most mass murderers — including many of those who have committed their violent acts while under

the influence of drugs — are extremely paranoid. Therefore, in order to understand mass murder, one must first understand what it means to be paranoid.

IMAGINE A child growing up in an environment in which the parent is cold, rejecting and vindictive. The child is verbally and physically abused.

Because many of our adult attitudes about the nature of the world are patterned after our first view of the world — namely, our family life — this child quickly concludes that the world is harsh and dangerous. The only role model the child has for how to survive in this cruel world is the parent. So the child quite naturally learns to be aggressive.

As an adult, he is blinded by his own anger and twisted attitudes so that he sees hostility wherever he looks — even if, in reality, it doesn't exist. The only modicum of security he can derive is from feeling powerful by intimidating others with his belligerence and threats.

As he encounters repeated setbacks such as being rejected by a lover or fired from a job, his conviction about being persecuted becomes stronger.

FEAR OF being destroyed by a hostile world prompts him to become

more and more isolated, as if he was retreating to high ground, ready to make his last stand against a violent assault.

As he becomes more isolated, he continues to lose touch with reality. He may begin to hear voices, voices either repeating cruel taunts from the past, or voices encouraging him to protect himself.

The person may try to self-medicate by taking illegal drugs, but rather than escaping the pain and the voices, the drugs merely weaken his already meager controls. Anger, mistrust and torment continue to increase.

Sometimes — unfortunately, it is incredibly rare — such a person finally listens to the voices encouraging him to lash out at his imagined enemies. The years of inner agony suddenly erupt into a violent rampage, as if the person is attempting to exorcise tormenting demons within, even if the violent explosion means his own self-destruction.

Dennis Sugrue, Ph.D., is a Farmington Hills resident and a clinical psychologist at Henry Ford Hospital. He welcomes questions and topics for future articles, but is unable to answer questions on an individual basis. Questions and topics may be sent to this newspaper.

House rejects amendment to cut dollars for public broadcasting

Here's how area members of Congress were recorded on major roll call votes July 23-25.

HOUSE

PUBLIC — By a vote of 176 for and 217 against, the House defeated an amendment to limit budget hikes for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

After rejecting this attempt to hold spending increases to 15 percent annually during fiscal 1987-89, the House approved hikes averaging 80 percent during the period.

The upshot was to reverse the Reagan Administration's deep cuts in federal support of public television and radio. More generous private contributions had been anticipated to take up the slack, but they fell far short of expectations and several programs have been scrapped or slated to die.

As later sent to the Senate, the bill (HR 5541) raises federal payments to \$258 million in 1987, \$253 million in 1988 and \$270 million in 1989.

Amendment sponsor Michael Oxley, R-Ohio, said "there is no reason to believe that public broadcasting needs such massive increases."

Opponent John Bryant, D-Texas, noted that the higher federal payments will provide "only 20 percent" of public broadcasting's revenue.

Members voting no favored annual spending hikes of about 80 percent over three years for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Voting no: Dennis Bitter, D-Hilltop; William Ford, D-Taylor; and Sander Levin, D-Southfield.

Voting for the cuts: Carl Pursell, R-Plymouth, and William Broomfield, R-Birmingham.

ACCESS — The House voted, 337 for and 77 against, to permit student groups to conduct voluntary religious meetings in public high school facilities before or after the regular school day.

This was a victory for advocates of returning to a degree of religious practice to public schools. The "equal access" provision approved by this vote denies federal funds to any school that fails to give religious groups the same extracurricular access to its facilities that it gives to other student groups. It was attached to an education bill (HR 1510) that was sent to conference with the Senate.

Sportsmen's Club holds open house

The Oakland County Sportsmen's Club will hold its annual picnic and open house from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 5. Admission is free and it is open to the public.

Club grounds are at 4770 Waterford Road, two blocks north of Andersonville Road and a quarter-mile east of Dixie Highway, Clarkston.

Events will include hot-air balloons, hayrides, dunk tank, fur trappers' tent, sports car track ride and an evening dance. Children's games will include a penny scramble, water balloon fight and hot-dog eating contest.

Food will range from full dinners to lunches and snacks, including pop, beer and mixed drinks. Information about the club is available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays from Roger Johnson at 623-0444.

roll call report

Because there is no disagreement over the equal access language, the provision is expected to become law.

Supporter Margo Ruckmeier, R-N.J., said the measure permits free speech and assembly to religious groups "and is therefore both legally acceptable and necessary in a free society under our Constitution."

Opponent Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said the provision "reverses a 200-year tradition in this country that many of our forefathers died for . . . the separation of church and state and no state establishment of a religion."

Members voting yes favored the equal access provision. Voting yes: Pursell, Hertel and Broomfield.

Voting no: Ford and Levin.

COLUMBUS — By a vote of 276 for and 130 against, the House gave final approval of a bill (HR 1492) establishing a federal commission to plan a national celebration in 1992 of the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of the New World. Senate approval and President Reagan's signature were to follow.

About \$2 million is budgeted initially for the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, whose staff members are to be paid up to \$65,400 annually and be eligible for federal retirement payments of up to \$9,500 annually. Most employees are to be appointed through political channels.

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