

Albany high school safely detains armed, troubled student

NORTHWEST ALBANY (AP) — A high school senior who came to school armed with two rifles under his overcoat had written letters saying he wanted police to kill him because he feared going to jail on burglary charges, authorities say. "I'm toast," wrote Thomas A. Caldwell. "All my hopes and dreams are gone."

Caldwell, 17, came to school Monday morning carrying one unloaded, sawed-off .22-caliber rifle and a loaded, sawed-off .300-caliber Savage rifle, according to an Albany police report.

Caldwell also was carrying a 15-inch bayonet and 69 rounds of ammunition for the guns, the police report said.

But nobody was hurt after an anonymous caller tipped school officials that Caldwell was armed.

Principal John DeBoie said Tuesday that Caldwell was standing outside his first-period classroom a short way from the school office when he, vice principal Don Tichenor, and assistant principals Dan Jamison and Jerry Bennett approached him.

"We all very quietly and closely escorted him to the office," DeBoie said.

The youth told the principals he had left a bag in the classroom but did not tell them what was inside, DeBoie said.

In the bag, with the bayonet and the bullets, officials found several handwritten letters.

Two were addressed to girls, one to "Fearless Leader," and another was labeled, "To Be Read Aloud in Class."

'I'm toast. All my hopes and dreams are gone.'

— Thomas A. Caldwell,
Albany high school senior

Several other pages contained messages to other students identified as his friends. Another was a will.

The letters said it was Caldwell's "destiny to die" and referred to eight felony charges in burglaries last month at downtown Albany computer stores. He said he expected to be sent to reform school and had nothing to live for.

The statements said he planned to take his English class hostage Monday. When police arrived, he planned to break out a window and shoot at police

as he climbed out. He wrote that he planned to keep shooting until police killed him.

If police used tear gas, he said, he would begin shooting his classmates.

In letters to friends, he wrote several times that he knew what he was doing. "I'm not crazy," he wrote. "I'm not an animal. I'm a man."

Linn County juvenile director Tom Johnson said Tuesday that his staff would recommend that Caldwell be kept in detention pending a hearing.

DeBoie said things were going well at school Tuesday.

"This is a very complex issue," he said, referring to Caldwell. "This is not a trend in schools. It's an individual who did a dumb thing."

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