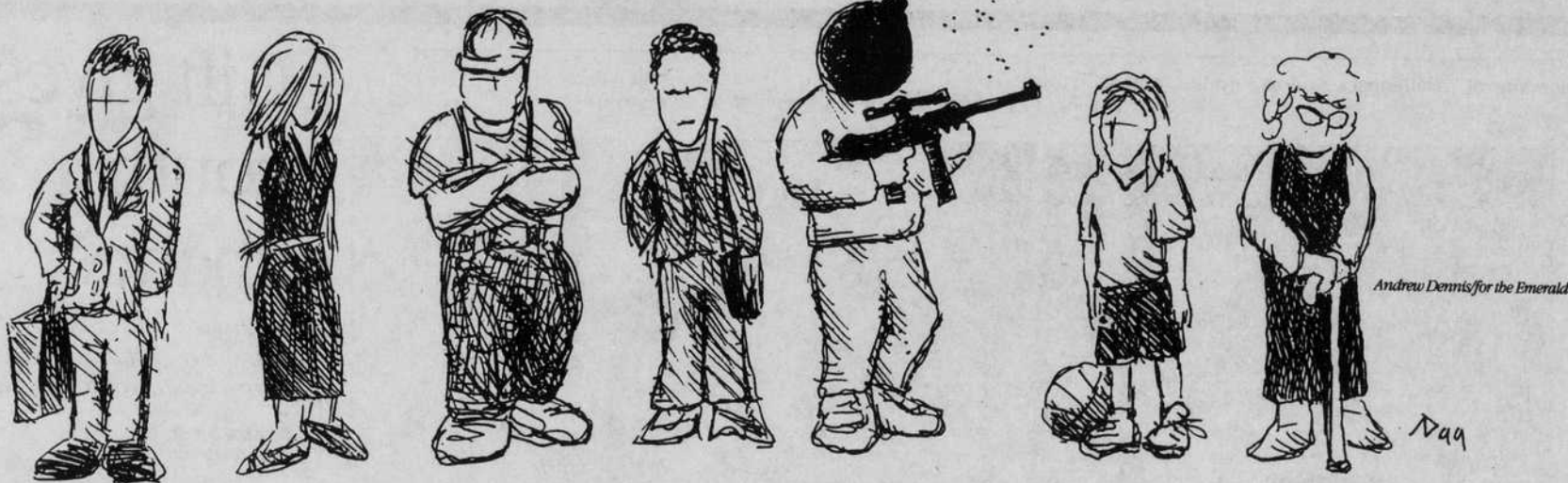


PERSPECTIVES

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Gone BAD



Yet another mass killing begs the question: What's wrong here?

What is it with this violence-crazed world anymore? Nary a day goes by without some kind of mass-murder rampage — or the lingering aftermath of one — booming from the television and screaming from the front-page headlines.

Our latest psychopath poster boy comes straight out of the Michael Douglas' "Falling Down" mode.

A seemingly mild-mannered chemist and securities day trader by day, Mark Barton decided he had "come to hate this life and this system of things," as he wrote in a letter discovered at the Barton home.

Barton promptly disposed of his wife, Leigh Ann, and two children, Matthew, 11, and Mychelle, 8, by bludgeoning them all over the head with a hammer in the days before heading to downtown Atlanta last Thursday.

Once there, Barton proceeded to open fire, double-fisted, in the Pied-

mont Road business district, killing nine others in a self-proclaimed attempt to "kill as many of the others who greedily sought my destruction."

Then, Barton fled the scene and finished the carnage by killing himself as police converged upon his Ford Aerostar van.

So, what are we to make of this, another in a seemingly unending stream of senseless violence?

Was Barton, who had a history of violence in his past, including the unsolved murders of his first wife and her mother in 1993, just a homicidal maniac? Someone whose impending eruption was inevitable?

Or does the rage run deeper than that, a product of a society gone drastically wrong?

Yes. Yes. Barton and Co. are reflective of a combination of those factors, probably.

Our lives and society are so fast-paced and hectic that sometimes things can seem out of control even

to people who are in no way psychopathic.

Perhaps it's a busy college lifestyle speaking, but life is stressful.

Modern pressures are steadily mounting, with an ever-increasing population comes more problems, more stressors, more ... And with all of that, people have less tolerance, less patience. They don't care about one another like they could.

Amid the pressure-packed environment, those swaying in a high-strung balance between life and violence may ultimately choose the latter in hopeless desperation.

Increasingly, whether it's a desire for some sort of twisted glory ("Natural Born Killers," anyone?) or mainly a residue of built-up bitterness, the most despondent of people are choosing to inflict as much pain on others as possible on the way to their own self-inflicted demises.

Not to say the single suicide is out of style. It's just out of the spotlight

because the more violently inclined choose to go down in a blaze.

In fact, suicide is now the eighth-leading cause of death in the United States, claiming about 30,000 lives per year, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Comparatively, 19,000 Americans are killed by homicide per year.

Regardless of the means, death is becoming more of an escape route than ever before.

What are we to do cure or at least calm the violence?

Some say gun control, others say education, others say early identification, still others say media regulation.

Whatever the supposed answer(s), a true pacification seems as unlikely as tomorrow's headlines.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Editorial Cartoons



Oregon Emerald

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