

# Veteran who tried to stop gunman was shot five times

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*Associated Press*

ROSEBURG — When the gunshots started at Umpqua Community College, some people mistook them for falling books. But Army veteran Chris Mintz quickly recognized the threat.

“He was in the military and knew what it was,” said Mintz’s aunt, Wanda Mintz.

Her 30-year-old nephew, a student at the college, told classmates to remain calm and went to the door as the shooter came across the hallway. He tried to stop the gunman from entering the classroom and was shot three times, his aunt said.

After Chris Mintz fell, he told the suspect: “It’s my son’s birthday today.

Don’t do this,” she said. The gunman then shot him at least twice more and went into the classroom, where he kept firing. Nine people were killed before the shooter died in a shootout with police.

Wanda Mintz said her nephew tried to crawl away but could not move because of his wounds. He was recuperating Friday at a hospital in Roseburg and was expected to survive.

“He’s lucky to be alive, and we’re grateful he’s alive,” his aunt told The Associated Press on Friday.

In an interview with ABC News, the younger Mintz said: “I just hope that everyone else is OK. I’m just worried about everyone else.”

A cousin who spoke with Mintz on Thursday night



Michael Garwood places flowers at a makeshift memorial near the road that leads to Umpqua Community College, Friday, in Roseburg.

said he “wishes he could have saved more people.”

“I’ve never seen him give up on anything,” said Derek Bourgeois of Hope Mills, North Carolina.

Word of Mintz’s actions

spread quickly. A page seeking donations on the fundraising site GoFundMe received more than \$375,000 Friday in a matter of hours.

Speaking by phone from her home in Randelman,

North Carolina, Wanda Mintz got a description of what happened from her nephew’s girlfriend. She said he went through seven hours of surgery.

“Chris is a tough guy,” she said.

He was hit in both legs, his stomach, his back and in the hand, but the bullets did not hit any of his vital organs. He has two rods in his legs and is going to be in a wheelchair for the foreseeable future, she said.

“It’s going to be a long, long recovery,” she said.

She said she spoke Friday with her nephew, who said he was in a lot of pain.

Chris Mintz was born and raised in Randelman, North Carolina, west of Raleigh. His son, Tyrik, turned 6 on Thursday, she said.

When he was in the mili-

tary, Mintz was stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia, then moved about nine years ago to a base in the West. He never saw combat, his aunt said.

She said he’s an athlete and was studying body building and nutrition. He left the Army a few years ago and was a part-time student at Umpqua, she said.

Mike Gwaltney, a swim coach at the YMCA where Mintz worked, said he was not surprised to hear how Mintz reacted.

“It’s something that Chris and many others are trained to do,” he said. “He’s a pretty tough cookie.”

Gwaltney said he saw Mintz at the hospital as he was coming out of surgery.

“For the most part,” Gwaltney said, “he was in very good spirits.”

## SHOOTING: Harper-Mercer flunked out of basic training in 2008

Continued from 1A

with his mother.

Officials on Friday also released the names of the dead, who ranged in age from 18 to 67 and included several freshmen and a teacher. They were sons and daughters, spouses and parents.

One of the students was active in the Future Farmers of America and loved to play soccer. Another was on only his fourth day of college. One was a 59-year-old student whose daughter was enrolled in the same school but not injured the shooting. Grieving families began sharing details of their loved ones.

“We have been trying to figure out how to tell everyone how amazing Lucas was, but that would take 18 years,” the family of Lucas Eibel, 18, said in a statement released through the Douglas County Sheriff’s Office.

Eibel, who was studying chemistry, volunteered at a wildlife center and animal shelter.

Quinn Glen Cooper’s family said their son had just started college and loved dancing and voice acting.

“I don’t know how we are going to move forward with our lives without Quinn,” the Coopers said. “Our lives are shattered beyond repair.”

Seven other people were wounded in the attack in Roseburg, about 180 miles south of Portland.

Harper-Mercer, who died during a shootout with police, was armed with handguns and a rifle, some of which were military grade. The weapons had been purchased legally over the past three years, some by him, others by relatives, said Celinez Nunez, assistant field agent for the Seattle division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Oregon’s top federal prosecutor says the shooter used a handgun when he opened fire on classmates and stashed a rifle in another room and did not fire it. He says it’s impossible to know what the shooter had planned for the rifle.

Those who knew the shooter described an awkward loner.

At a different apartment complex where Harper-Mercer and his mother lived in Southern California, neighbors remembered a quiet and odd young man who rode a red bike everywhere.

Reina Webb, 19, said the man’s mother was friendly and often chatted with neighbors, but Harper-Mercer kept to himself. She said she occasionally heard him having temper tantrums in his apartment.

“He was kind of like a child so that’s why his tantrums would be like kind of weird. He’s a grown man. He shouldn’t be having a tantrum like a kid. That’s why I thought there was something — something was up,” she said.

Harper-Mercer’s social media profiles suggested he was fascinated by the Irish Republican Army and frustrated by traditional organized religion. He also tracked other mass shootings. In one post, he appeared to urge readers to watch the online footage of Vester Flanagan shooting two former colleagues live on TV in August in Virginia, noting “the more people you kill, the more you’re in the limelight.”



The photos of three of the victims of the mass shooting at Umpqua Community College are displayed at a news conference, Friday in Roseburg. In the photos, from left, are Quinn Cooper, 18, Lucas Eibel, 18, center, and Jason Johnson, 33. They were among those killed when Chris Harper Mercer, walked into a class at the community college, Thursday, and opened fire. At left is Portland Police Sgt. Pete Simpson.

He may have even posted a warning. A message on 4chan — a forum where racist and misogynistic comments are frequent — warned of an impending attack, but it’s unclear if it came from Harper-Mercer.

“Some of you guys are alright. Don’t go to school tomorrow if you are in the northwest,” an anonymous poster wrote a day before the shootings.

On Thursday morning, he walked into Snyder Hall at Umpqua Community College and began firing, shooting many victims repeatedly. Survivors described a classroom of carnage, and one said he ordered students to state their religion before shooting them.

Janet Willis told The Associated Press her granddaughter, Anastasia Boylan, was in the classroom.

Willis, who visited her granddaughter in the hospital, said Friday Boylan told her the shooter was asking students about their faith. “If they said they were Christian, he shot them in the head,” Willis said her granddaughter told her.

She said her granddaughter also told her the shooter handed a student who wasn’t shot a package and told him to deliver it to authorities.

Students in a classroom next door heard several shots, one right after the other, and their teacher told them to leave.

“We began to run,” student Hannah Miles said. “A lot of my classmates were going every which way.”

Several years ago, Harper-Mercer moved to Winchester, Oregon, from Torrance, California, with his mother, a nurse named Laurel Harper. His father, Ian Mercer, originally from the United Kingdom, told reporters outside his Tarzana, California, home, “I’m just as shocked as anybody at what happened.”

At school in Oregon, “he was a typical Roseburg kid, kind of nerdy, kind of out there. Just himself,” said Alex Frier, a stage manager at the college who said Harper-Mercer built sets for theater performances last semester.

A neighbor, Bronte Harte, said Harper-Mercer “seemed really unfriendly” and would “sit by himself in the dark in the balcony with this little light.”

Harte said a woman she believed to be Mercer’s mother also lived upstairs and was “crying her eyes out” Thursday.

The Army said Harper-Mercer flunked out of

also pass a multiple-choice test covering science, math, reading comprehension and other topics.

In Washington, President Barack Obama lamented the government’s inability to pass stricter gun laws even after attacks like the one in Oregon.

At a news conference Friday at the White House, Obama said he plans to keep talking about the issue and “will politicize it” because inaction is itself a political decision the U.S. is making.

He said it’s impossible to identify mentally ill people likely to perpetrate mass shootings ahead of time. The only thing the U.S. can do, he explained, is ensure they don’t have an arsenal available “when something in them snaps.”

Mendoza reported from Santa Cruz. AP writers Steven Dubois, Jonathan J. Cooper and Rachel La Corte in Portland; Tami Abdollah and Gosia Wozniacka in Roseburg; Michael R. Blood in Torrance, California; Rebecca Boone in Boise and Eric Tucker in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

## Train hero avoided Umpqua rampage due to TV show rehearsal

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Alek Skarlatos, one of three Americans hailed as heroes for stopping a terrorist attack on a Paris-bound train in August, would have been at the Oregon college where a gunman killed nine people if Skarlatos hadn’t been in Los Angeles to rehearse for ABC’s “Dancing With the Stars.”

Skarlatos put off enrolling this semester at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon, to compete in the show, a spokeswoman said Friday.

In an interview with ABC News, Skarlatos was asked if he would have taken down the shooter Thursday.

“I would have tried anyways,” he said.

Skarlatos said he was with “Dancing” partner Lindsay Arnold when he received a text from a friend about the shooting. He said he then looked up

the news on the Internet to confirm it.

“I just sat down for a second and then hid in the bathroom so the cameras couldn’t see me,” he said.

Skarlatos said he decided quickly to return to Roseburg to be with the community.

As far as he knows, none of his friends were among the victims.

“My heart really goes out to the people who can’t say the same,” he said.

Skarlatos and two friends, U.S. Air Force Airman Spencer Stone, 23, and Anthony Sadler, 23, received worldwide acclaim when they tackled the gunman aboard a train while vacationing in Europe. The heroics earned Skarlatos his stint on “Dancing With the Stars.”

The next installment of the competition airs on Monday. If he misses that show he would be eliminated under the rules.



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