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contacts with their lawyers and families, their fears and apprehensions. The newspaper staffed Sunday services at several churches and reported extensively on what the ministers were saying to their congregations about forgiveness and healing, and about the few angry voices in the city starting to call for the boys to be tried as adults and to face adult punishment if found guilty. At one Catholic church, young girls handed, without explaining, a small stone to each person entering. The minister began his sermon by saying, "Now, let those without sin cast the first stone." The *Sun* staff, by now exhausted after five consecutive 18-hour days, probably would have welcomed a chance to sleep in that Sunday morning. But they were out and about their town covering church services and, again, they were reporting the story closest to the hearts and minds of their readers.

March 31

The top of Page One is taken up by five color photos of the four girls and one teacher killed in the shooting. There is an overall heading saying "Five Precious Memories." Under each photo is the lead of a staff story recounting the life of that person. Each of the stories jumps at least a full column and includes detailed quotes of remembrance from mothers, fathers, friends and teachers and, in the case of teacher Shannon Wright, a husband. Second play goes to an advance on the communitywide "Service for Hope and Healing" that night. Other Page One stories are about the continuing police investigation and a court administrator saying juvenile judges need more options in dealing with young children who commit major crimes. There are six teasers to related inside stories. Page 1B is devoted almost entirely to the school. The banner at the top says "Westside students back on campus" and details in 25 inches the way in which counseling efforts have students not only back in school but functioning almost normally. One story explains the best ways (with a detailed street map) to get through expected heavy traffic to the service that evening. Another gives the minute-by-minute sched-

ule: who will speak, who will sing and the names of the hymns.

Troutt's editorial suggests attendance at the healing service, cautions against calls for vengeance and is headlined "Healing."

April 1

Nearly 8,000 people — one of every six residents of Jonesboro — turned out for the "Service for Hope and Healing" at the convocation center at Arkansas State University and the *Sun* devotes most of pages 1A and 1B to several stories and photographs about the event, with lengthy jumps. Attorney General Janet Reno spoke and President Clinton appeared on videotape. The families of the five people killed attended. Many ministers spoke, choirs sang, stuffed animals were passed out to children, and everyone got a white ribbon of remembrance. The stories are written in ways that reflect the power and emotion of the evening while avoiding maudlin language.

Succeeding days

The *Sun* continues to publish daily as much as a half-page of letters from readers still wanting to talk about the shootings, as it had virtually every day since Day One. But other national, state and local news stories have retaken the front pages. It's said that a mark of good editors and their staffs is knowing when to pull out all of the stops on a huge story, and also knowing when to get the story off the front page.

In the movie "Absence of Malice," there is a scene in which a crusty city editor tries to comfort a young reporter who wrote a story that resulted in a woman's suicide. The editor, maintaining that the story was legitimate and should have been published despite the consequences, says to the distraught reporter, "I know how to print what's true. And I know how not to hurt people. But I don't know how to do both at the same time."

That editor could have learned a lesson from *The Jonesboro Sun*. In covering the tragedy at Westside Middle School, John Troutt, Mike Overall, Larry Fugate and the staff of the *Sun* demonstrated how it can, and should, be done.