



- Bob McNamara interviews friends of one of the victims. Dan Rather follows with short obituaries.
- Rita Braver reports on Maryland's efforts in crack down on those who call in bomb threats and trigger false fire alarms in schools, such as occurred in Jonesboro.

#### NBC

- Jim Avila recaps the crime. NBC claims an exclusive: The suspects had 10 weapons. Suspects are identified.
- Bob Dotson with angry parents; interviews with students and with a minister who met with jailed suspects.
- First-person narrative from an emergency room physician.
- "In Depth" from Roger O'Neil on latchkey kids who get in trouble right after school lets out.

#### ANALYSIS

*Nothing was outside the bounds of good journalism. ABC presented a balanced report with no finger-pointing, possibly too balanced: It required careful attention to come away with the full import of what was presented. With their longer pieces, CBS (kids and bomb threats) and NBC (latchkey kids) were a bit off the mark. Guns, culture, early warning signs, coping with unexpected death would have been topics worth exploring.*

#### MAGAZINE SHOWS

##### "PrimeTime Live" (ABC)

- Most of the program is devoted to developments in Jonesboro. John Quinones provides the first and most complete look at the suspects, including home video of one of them learning to fire a rifle at age 6. He has the longest interview yet with the grandfather of one suspect.
- Diane Sawyer shows interviews with juvenile killers from shootings in three other states, in which they tell their stories, experiences and thoughts since incarceration. Her report concludes with one of them telling viewers: "If you feel (anger or rage) tell someone, and tell someone else and then tell another."

#### ANALYSIS

*This program was an impressive piece of work, showing what can be done if enough resources are dedicated to a story. The interview with the grandfather was informative and compelling. Sawyer's segment, particularly its conclusion, was a real attention-getter.*

**March 26**

#### MORNING TALK SHOWS

##### "Good Morning America" (ABC)

- Interview with the grandfather of one of the suspects, which includes the airing of a profile of the boy.

- Federal prosecutor says she is exploring all possibilities for bringing charges.
- Interview with a student and her mother outside the school.

##### "Today" (NBC)

- Katie Couric says charges will be filed, then turns to a report on the guns, how they were stolen, and gun-club membership.
- Couric interviews Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee. In a pointed exchange, she calls the suspects' arsenal "terrifying" and notes that it's not illegal in Arkansas to have those kinds of weapons. The governor responds that it was illegal because the guns were stolen. Couric asks if the South glamorizes guns, in view of several school killings; the governor takes exception, and says it is ridiculous to say Southerners are more likely to use guns in violent ways.
- Interviews with students at the school.
- Interview with a minister about listening to children, followed by a psychologist.

#### ANALYSIS

*The "Good Morning America" interview with a suspect's grandfather is a good example of how live television may work as a catharsis for viewers. Shocking stories produce a need to hear as much as can be supplied, even though the material may not advance the story.*

*Couric's pursuit of the gun issue with the governor on "Today" drew criticism in Jonesboro at a public forum in April. Resident Dan Melton said Couric "consistently tried to trap the governor into saying things, trying to get (across) her personal viewpoint about guns."*

*Perhaps Couric's doggedness caught the governor off guard and made him a little irritated. But her line of questioning was legitimate; it was a fair topic to explore and certainly was on the minds of many viewers. The real weakness of this segment was that more time needed to be spent on the issue.*

#### EVENING NEWSCASTS

##### ABC

- Dean Reynolds reports on funeral preparations, and children asking if their schools are safe. Audio tape of the first 911 calls.
- Aaron Hayes profiles slain teacher Shannon Wright.
- Aaron Brown reports from West Paducah, Ky.

##### CBS

- Bob McNamara has a basic wrap-up that includes nervous children returning to school and the audio of the 911 calls.
- Profile of the slain teacher.

**Above, left to right: Diane Sawyer opens "PrimeTime Live" on March 25. A crowd of media converges on a Westside student for an interview. NBC's Katie Couric interviews Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee.**