

He Applied Himself

February 23, 2018

"I need to make this count," wrote a young man in Everett, Washington.

Unfortunately, it looks like he wasn't attempting a big career-oriented project. He was planning a mass shooting.

"I need to get the biggest fatality number I possibly can," is one of many damning journal passages the police have made public. Apparently he had settled on attacking the high school he attended. "I've been reviewing many mass shootings/bombings (and

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attempted bombings) I'm learning from past shooters/bombers mistakes."

Ambition and rigor: *missapplied*.

Fortunately, his grandmother read his journal and discovered a rifle in his guitar case. She turned him into the police the Tuesday before the Florida shooting I wrote about last week. And maybe just in time.

Meanwhile, last week's Parkland, Florida, shooting dominates the headlines. Fellow



students and neighbors of the Florida shooting victims have ramped up their condemnations and demands — including at a horrorshow "town hall" on CNN.

Yet the nature of the difficulties in preventing such atrocities has become lost in the rhetoric and anger.*

In a free society, we cannot arrest people before they commit a crime. In the Everett case, officials were "lucky": despite the young man's lack of a criminal record, they were able to charge him with a burglary they allege he committed the day before arrest — and his extensive planning notes are being taken as evidence for intent. He's also been charged with attempted murder.

We should be in inquiry mode, right now. It could be helpful to know the exact motivations for both the Florida shooter and the Everett wannabe — and similar cases.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

** Law enforcement is tasked with uncovering spree shooting plots today — and to protect, too. But the armed, uniformed school resource officer at the Parkland high school failed to protect. He heard the gunshots but never entered the building, while the shooter killed 17 innocents.*