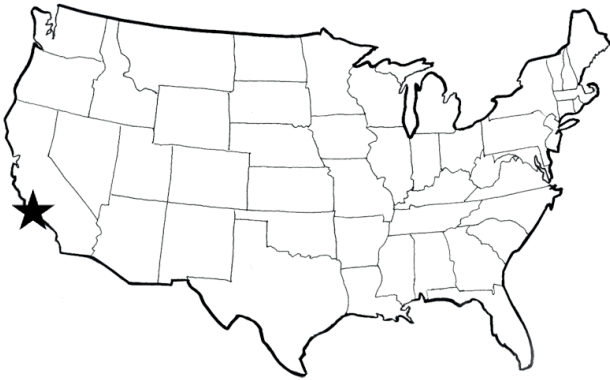


Goleta, California

January, 2006



“An act of violence is always a shock to the soul, but especially in a small community such as ours, where our neighbours are our friends, and where violence of any kind is extremely rare...a day at the office should not result in death.” – **Goleta Mayor Jonny Wallis, speaking at a press conference, January 31st 2006**

In the late eighteenth century, a Spanish *goleta* sailing ship was passing around the tip of southern California when it wrecked within sight of a sparsely-inhabited, three-mile stretch of the Santa Barbara coastline. It remained visible from the beach for years, and as more settlers began to arrive it seemed such a prominent feature that it gave the area the name by which it would become known. Goleta, however, had already been inhabited for thousands of years. It was home to the native Chumash people, and was not reached by Europeans until 1542.

43 year-old Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo had been first to get there - an Iberian sailor (from the Iberian Peninsula, in Europe's southwestern corner), he had sailed as a young man first to Cuba, and then on to Mexico, where he met a man named Hernán Cortés; a *conquistador* from Medellin, northern Spain. Conquistadors were the Spanish and Portuguese 'conquerors' of their times, and would colonise large parts of the world in the name of the Spanish and Portuguese empires through the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Cabrillo and Cortés joined forces, and headed for Mexico; which, along with parts of North America, South America, Asia and Oceania was known as *New Spain* at the time.

Spanish *encomienda* law dictated that should a conquistador arrive at a previously unreachable area of the 'New Land', he was entitled to enslave any native people he found there at the end of a gun, and profit from their forced labour. Exploiting this law quickly made Cabrillo one of the richest conquistadors of his time, via gold mining in neighbouring Guatemala. He took a native woman there as his common-law wife and fathered several children, but on then sailing

back to Spain married a different woman, and returned with her to Guatemala. She would give birth to two sons, and Cabrillo would make his way into Honduras, enslaving the people that he met there. Families were broken apart, with the men and boys forced to work in gold mines, and the women and girls given as 'gifts' to his sailors and soldiers.

In 1539, Spanish explorer Francisco de Ulloa, who had been contracted by Cortés, discovered the Gulf of California; a waterway of the Pacific Ocean that separates the Baja California Peninsula from the Mexican mainland. In the wake of this discovery, Cabrillo found himself contracted by the Viceroy of New Spain, Antonio Mendoza, to head north along the Pacific Coast in search of trade opportunities. With the map being unfinished and the area unknown, the voyage's goals also included discovering a possible shipping route to China, if there was one, and/or the mythical Strait of Anian – which would later become known as the Northwest Passage.

This route, that would allow a ship to sail from Europe to the Far East through the Canadian Arctic, would not be successfully navigated until 1906, and Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen and his crew would be the first to do that. Their achievement came 61 years after the Great British *Franklin Expedition* disaster of 1845; when having sailed deep into the Arctic, the expedition's two vessels - the *Erebus* and *Terror*, carrying 129 men - had become frozen in the ice. When the ice had refused to melt, and the months had turned into years, those that hadn't starved to death were forced to eat the bodies of those that had, and attempt a suicidal march of almost a thousand miles through the Arctic winter to civilisation. Everybody had died.

Cabrillo travelled from El Salvador to Navidad, Mexico, and from there set sail with three ships; the *La Victoria*, the *San Salvador*, and the *San Miguel*. The expedition headed north along the California coast; past San Diego Bay and San Miguel Island, and then eventually arrived in Santa Barbara. It was ruled by an 'old woman' at the time,

he noted, and two of the neighbouring Chumash tribes were at war with each other. Cabrillo then died on nearby Santa Catalina Island, aged 43, on the 3rd of January 1543, after developing gangrene in a leg injury.

By the turn of the 1900s, Goleta was a place best known for its farming and lemon-growing, and became a popular spot for early aviation pioneers. 27 year-old aviator Lincoln Beachey had sensationally flown over it in 1914, and was a star of his time. Known for his daring tricks, loops and stunts, he had previously flown over Niagara Falls, set an altitude record of 11,578 feet, and performed for over 17 million Americans, which was around a fifth of the U.S. population. Beachey, legendary pioneer Orville Wright had said, was ‘the most wonderful flyer of all.’ He was killed in 1915, while debuting a new flying machine over his hometown of San Francisco, and his funeral was the biggest that the city had ever seen.

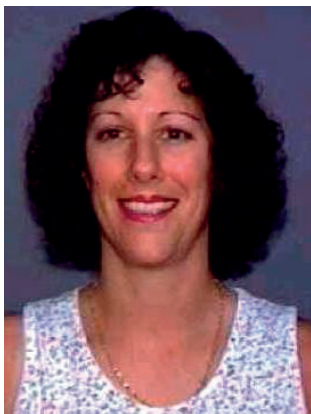
Midway through the Second World War, Goleta was then shelled by a Japanese submarine on the evening of Monday, the 23rd of February, 1942. It was one of very few attacks that would actually hit U.S. soil. The event had been known as the “Bombardment of Ellwood”, but nobody had been killed, and damage had been minimal. Regardless, hundreds of terrified local residents had fled east, fearing that a full-scale enemy invasion could be imminent along the coast of California. It seemed necessary that an airport should be built, or at least an airfield, and so the MCAS (Marine Corps Air Station) Santa Barbara was completed, only moments from Goleta, by the Marine Corps that same year. When the war ended, the site was then expanded, and became a civilian airport in 1946.

As the century progressed, what had been a rural and agricultural community started to become a high-tech one, and as the year 2000 arrived, Goleta had gained a reputation as a centre for a number of high-tech firms. With a population of some 29,000 people it had become known for its surfers, college professors and IT workers, and many residents not working locally were employed by

similar tech-sector companies in Santa Barbara. It was a quiet place to live, and hadn't seen a murder in fourteen years.

Around a mile and a half from the coastline, Storke Road ran south from central Goleta to the neighbouring community of Isla Vista, and on its east side, at the end of a driveway and behind a barrier, lay the Santa Barbara Processing and Distribution Center. It was a warehouse-like, 200,000 sq. ft. mail-processing facility for the U.S. Postal Service, and inside, 40 year-old postal worker Jennifer San Marco was working night shifts.

With tens of thousands of items being distributed daily, extensive mail-sorting machinery within the facility made a tremendous and constant noise, and many employees had taken to wearing earplugs, or listening to music through headphones when on shift. Items that could not be read by the machines, or were an unusual shape or size, however, had to be sorted by hand, and so, sat alone at her workstation, the job mainly consisted of organising countless envelopes into 'pigeon holes', so that they could be sent out and delivered. To many, it was considered monotonous. Jennifer would start at nine o'clock in the evening, and not finish until early the next morning. She seemed quiet, kept to herself, and doesn't seem to have had any problems with anyone.



She was of Italian descent, and had been born in Brooklyn, New York, on Friday, the 6th of December 1961. She studied natural resources management at Rutgers University in New Jersey, though didn't graduate, and at the age of 27 left New York to travel west. She settled in Blythe, California, around 330 miles east of Santa Barbara,

and soon took a job nearby - as a prison guard, within the medium-security Chuckawalla Valley State Prison. Two days before her probation ended, however, she quit, and never gave a reason for doing so. Those that had known her during her time there had considered her to be a good worker.

She headed further west to Santa Barbara, and in the mid-1990s, having undergone an extensive background check and psychological examination, spent a number of months working as a police dispatcher for the Santa Barbara Police Department. Working as an emergency dispatcher can be stressful, or even traumatising, and many people choose to leave the job after only a short amount of time. Likewise, Jennifer decided to do something else, and worked for a while as a 'lunch lady' in a nearby high school. She then bought a condominium in Goleta, and took her job at the Distribution Center.

Living next door to her, however, 50 year-old Beverly Graham had soon come to find her increasingly difficult to tolerate. Beverly worked as a phone operator for a power company, and had noticed that since around the time she turned 40, Jennifer's behaviour had begun to change. At first, she had begun talking to herself, and had then soon started leaving her house to rant and rave in front of the building. She would stand in the road and sing as loud as she could, and shout and yell incoherently. Beverly had gone outside a number of times, and the pair had had heated arguments, but when Jennifer would see her later, she would just smile as if nothing had happened. On a number of occasions she'd wanted to call the police, but her long-term boyfriend, 53 year-old Eddie Blomfield, had talked her out of it.

"She's just nuts", he would say. Soon, though, it was happening more regularly, and it wasn't long before she was blasting loud music, and leaving the house to shout racial slurs and 'profanity-laced rap lyrics'. Beverly had had enough, and called the police, but the responding officers quickly left again when Jennifer agreed to keep the noise down.

By February of 2001, to those inside the Distribution Center she had become similarly harder to ignore. Workers around her had noticed that she seemed to be constantly talking with someone who didn't seem to be there, and 57 year-old worker Dexter Shannon had become alarmed. Shannon had served with the United States Air Force, was a veteran of the Vietnam War, and those that knew him would remember that he never seemed to say 'an unkind word about anyone'.

He had struck up a conversation with her, but then been surprised when she insisted on changing the subject. She wanted to talk about a female ex-employee that they had both known, who had recently killed herself. The way she spoke of what had happened, he thought, was unnerving.

Shannon reported the incident to a supervisor, but supervisors were already aware of how she was acting. What had started as talking to herself had begun to escalate into shouting - then furiously arguing, screaming racial slurs, and gesturing wildly at people who weren't there. Her rants often seemed fixated with and hostile towards Asian people, and along with those now concerned for her mental state, some were beginning to feel intimidated. She had been known to shout and yell at other co-workers, and her appearance often seemed strange. Some noticed that she had taken to wearing lipstick, but had applied it simply as a thick line across her mouth and face. One co-worker thought it looked 'like war paint'.

She was asked to speak with a supervisor inside their office, but refused, and caused such a scene that the police had to be called. She took off running through the warehouse with two officers in pursuit, and had to be dragged from beneath a piece of machinery when they finally caught her.

A member of the mental health assessment team was called, and on meeting her, ordered that she be detained and sectioned - on a 72-hour involuntary hold, within the Vista Del Mar Psychiatric Facility in Ventura, around 35 miles west of Goleta.

She was assessed for three days, and a diagnosis was reportedly made, but details of what it may have been were never disclosed. Regardless, once 72 hours had passed there was no legal way of keeping her at the facility without her consent. She refused an offer of treatment, and left.

When she returned to work, it seemed to those at the Distribution Center that she was refusing to acknowledge those around her. She still performed her work duties, but in 2003 staff had been forced to dial 911 again, and have police remove her from the building for a second time. 'She had not threatened anyone', it would be stated, 'but other employees were concerned for her welfare'. She returned to work once again, but quickly caused more complaints by raving and shouting abuse.

'She was screaming', co-worker Jeff Tabala would remember; 'She was saying a lot of racist comments. It was pretty ugly'. It was decided that it would be best if she didn't work there any more, and so the company retired her, after six years, on psychological disability grounds in late 2003.

Now finding herself retired at only forty-two years old, Jennifer decided to sell her condominium in Goleta, packed her red, Toyota pickup truck, and left California. She headed east along Route 66, drove across the entire state of Arizona, and headed on into New Mexico.

Where exactly she was going is unclear, but as she approached the village of Milan, around seventy miles west of Albuquerque, her truck broke down.

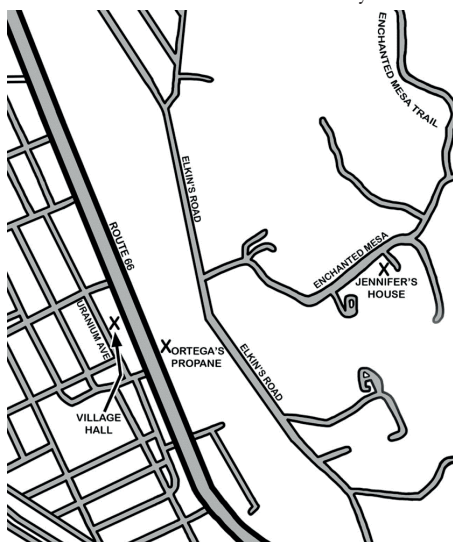
It was a remote desert village, with a population of 2,200 people, and lay on a vast flat plain with long-distant hills and mountains visible clearly along the horizon. Covering around four square miles, the majority of the village lay on the west side of the highway, and beyond it lay hundreds of miles of untouched desert.

On the east lay a hillside, with a few dozen houses scattered randomly across it on a winding set of dirt roads. The similarly

desolate town of Grants stood just behind to the south-east, a couple of miles away.

She hadn't intended to stop in Milan, but she had driven for over twelve hours, and was more than eight hundred miles from Goleta. She made a decision, seemingly on an impulse, and decided that she would buy a property and live there.

Her new home was an 'A-frame', two-storey, three bedroom family house with a back yard, on Enchanted Mesa Trail - along the hillside to the east of the freeway. Painted yellow, it sat on 3.9 acres



of scrubland, but beyond the limits of the property lay millions of acres of the New Mexico desert. Having gotten her truck fixed she headed to Ortega's Propane, just over a kilometre south-west on Route 66, and arranged a deal for a 250-gallon tank to power the house. Typically, it would last a few months, and whenever it ran out business owner Abel Ortega would refill it.

Jennifer would then drive to the shop within a day or two, and pay whatever she owed. She seemed nice, he thought, always polite, and was a good customer. She always paid her bills on time, but he had noticed that she often seemed to be talking to herself. It was, he thought, as if she had an 'imaginary friend'.

Jennifer was receiving regular disability checks in the mail from the Postal Service, and it wasn't long before she was becoming a frequent visitor to the Milan Village Hall, near the centre of town on

Uranium Avenue. She met a clerk named Sonya Salazar, and seemed to take something of a shine towards her, but over the course of the next year seemed to be arriving for increasingly trivial reasons. She started asking specifically for her, and would refuse to be seen by anyone else.

Sometimes she would sit in the waiting room and stare at her, and on other occasions had stormed out of the building, ranting and shouting, before then driving slowly back and forth across the front door. She had started dressing differently, and had crudely cut her hair into spikes. It was clearly something that she'd done herself.

An incident in July of 2004 had caused staff to become further concerned. Jennifer had arrived at the Village Hall, declared that she wished to apply for a business permit, and spoke to clerk Terri Gillingham, a black woman, to tell her the details. She wished to print and distribute a five-volume work of her own writings, she said, and its title was 'The Racist Press'.

From across the counter, and with a pane of glass between them, Gillingham could see that something was wrong. Jennifer was talking about her proposal, but it seemed nonsensical, and in mid-conversation she kept turning to shout and argue with someone that didn't seem to be there.

Also, *The Racist Press*, despite its title, didn't appear to be a directly racist document at all. Instead, it seemed to be a somewhat difficult to follow series of declarations on religion, karma, and conspiracy theories, of which she detailed a number. It also contained repeated mentions of David Berkowitz - New York's 'Son of Sam' serial killer, who had shot six people to death and wounded seven more between the Julys of 1976 and '77.

Berkowitz was a former U.S. Army soldier, and, like Jennifer, had been working for the U.S. Postal Service. Typically, after dark, he would drive from his home to a location, walk around the nearby area, and on spotting lone young women or couples, open fire from close

range before fleeing. Five of his victims were young women aged between 18 and 26, and were murdered in the neighbouring Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn areas, where Jennifer was living. She had been fifteen years old at the time, and for many, the fear in the area had been intense.

Berkowitz had initially been referred to by the press as the ‘.44 Caliber Killer’, on account of a .44 revolver that he used to shoot his victims. The *caliber* of a firearm refers to the diameter of its barrel (and therefore also of the projectile it fires) and is typically, but not always, measured in inches. Berkowitz’s .44 was a very powerful handgun, but his nickname had soon changed, following a double murder on the 17th of April, 1977. Having killed both Alexander Esau, 20, and Valentina Suriani, 18, as they sat together in Esau’s car, Berkowitz placed a handwritten, taunting letter by their bodies, and ran. It was addressed to Captain Joseph Borrelli of the New York Police Department, and soon a similar communication had arrived for a columnist of the New York Daily News. The messages were cryptic and rambling, but the name he used was the one by which he became known.

“I am the son of Sam”, the N.Y.P.D.’s letter had said; “I am a little “brat.” When father Sam gets drunk he gets mean. He beats his family. Sometimes he ties me up to the back of the house. Other times he locks me in the garage. Sam loves to drink blood. “Go out and kill” commands father Sam. Behind our house some rest. Mostly young – raped and slaughtered – their blood drained – just bones now Papa Sam keeps me locked in the attic too. I can’t get out but I look out the attic window and watch the world go by. I feel like an outsider. I am on a different wavelength (than) everybody.”

When arrested, 24 year-old Berkowitz told investigators that he had been obeying the commands of a demon, that had manifested itself in the form of his neighbour’s dog. Authorities detained him in a psychiatric ward, but after being assessed three times he was deemed fit to stand trial, and handed six consecutive life sentences. At his sentencing hearing, he attempted to jump from a seventh-floor

window, and when restrained in the courtroom began screaming at the family of his final victim.

“(She) was a whore!” he shouted; *“I’d kill her again! I’d kill them all again!”*

He was sent to the Clinton Correctional Facility in Dannemora, New York, but in the 1990s, after almost two decades in prison, he stated that he wished to change his story. This time, he told investigators that he had actually been a member of a child-molesting satanic cult, and had committed the murders along with the other members as ‘rituals’ and ‘sacrifices’. As a result, police had been forced to reopen the case in 1996, but would come to determine that there was no evidence the cult had even existed. Berkowitz, it was re-declared, had acted alone, and was either deluded or lying.

The Racist Press, however, appeared to be claiming that he had, in fact, been unwittingly exploited by the U.S. Government; who, in collaboration with the Ku Klux Klan, were acting ‘as a white supremacist affiliate’ and ‘embracing Nazi German dogma.’ It also seems to have suggested that he may have been psychic, having channelled ‘a dog’s commands to murder seven teenagers’. Actually, he had attacked eight teenagers in total, but had only murdered three.

Authorities, it said, were inciting members of the public to commit acts of mass murder by placing subliminal messaging in movies such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and by giving huge publicity to certain murder cases. The Berkowitz case, as it happens, and especially the events following his arrest, had indeed received massive media attention, and led many to complain that he had been given a ‘celebrity status’.

Gillingham looked across the counter to Jennifer. She was ‘arguing and using foul language’, but not towards her. Instead, she clearly appeared to be arguing with someone who didn’t seem to be there. Her permit application, anyway, was unsuccessful. At some point she also applied for a licence to sell cat food, but whatever had happened

during *that* application, it had been similarly denied. At the Village Hall, however, Jennifer's constant appearances were becoming more of a problem, and had now drawn everyone's attention.

She had started to become hostile towards Sonya Salazar; and would shout, scream abuse, and make outrageous accusations. Staff had taken to warning her whenever she was about to arrive, and she had taken to hiding behind a security door.

It seemed impossible to predict what she was going to do next, and, on Thursday, the 3rd of March, 2005, she walked into the building and began furiously screaming that Salazar was 'sleeping with someone'. She seemed out of control, and somebody dialled 911, but she had already driven away by the time police arrived. The staff could see that she was ill.

"We knew she had mental problems", Salazar would later say; "We just felt sorry for her." Many in town had taken to calling her the 'crazy lady', and she had gained a reputation for making purchases in grocery stores, then dumping them, along with her change, into the garbage on the way out. She was doing the same at liquor stores, and would frequently visit restaurants, order food, and then leave before it arrived. She had started talking to animals, and seems to have believed that birds were sending her messages.

At Ortega's Propane on Route 66, Abel Ortega had noticed too. He had seen her kneeling in prayer by the roadsides as he had driven around town, and stood by as she acted unusually inside the shop. On one occasion, she had arrived unexpectedly and said that she had a bill to pay, but on flipping through his records he'd been unable to find anything.

"Why, you don't owe nothing", he said.

Jennifer turned to her right, and began shouting at someone who wasn't there. "*See?*", she said; "*I told you that I didn't owe a bill...I already paid it!*" She continued to argue for a few moments, and then turned back to face him. "OK", she said; "*Well, thank you very much!*" She headed out of the door, got into her truck, and left.

For the rest of that summer, those that regularly saw her around Milan could see that her behaviour seemed to be getting worse. In a move that many would have previously thought to be out of character, she had also started to collect a number of tattoos, and would insist on showing them to people that she recognised. When one had not known how to react, she had danced around them and spat on the floor.

On another occasion, police had been called to a gas station in Grants after she walked onto the forecourt, stripped herself naked, and began shouting incoherently. By the time the police arrived, however, she had dressed herself again, and was let off with a warning.

That August, she made her way south-east to Ace Pawn and Antiques; around three miles away, in Grants - and of the large selection of firearms for sale, it was a Smith and Wesson Model 915 that caught her attention.

The Model 915 is a 9mm semi-automatic pistol, that holds a 15-round magazine and fires a bullet, nine millimetres in diameter, at some 1150fps/784mph. It's an American-made firearm, and was manufactured between 1992 and 1995.



‘Semi-automatic’ handguns of this type use the recoil produced by the firing of a bullet to chamber the next round, which removes the need to manually reload the weapon between shots. For that reason, they’re also sometimes known as *self-loading* firearms. When the gun is loaded and the trigger pulled, the *hammer* inside the gun strikes the *primer* on the back of the bullet cartridge, which ignites the powder inside and causes a recoil; forcing the *slide*, on the top of the gun, backwards as the bullet is fired.

This movement ejects the spent cartridge casing from the side of the weapon, and re-cocks the hammer inside. It also allows a spring within the magazine, which inserts into the grip, to push the next round upwards into the firing chamber as the slide returns to position. This essentially means that its fire rate is limited only by the speed at which the user can keep pulling the trigger, with one round being fired for every pull until the magazine is empty.

Jennifer was told that there was a fifteen-day waiting period to buy it, and that she would have to submit her details to pass a background check. Fifteen days later, however, despite having been sectioned in a psychiatric facility, and forced into early retirement due to mental health problems, she was cleared to make the purchase. She drove back to Ace Pawn and Antiques to collect it, paid \$325, and then, for whatever reason, drove some sixty miles north to a pawn shop in the town of Gallup to buy two hundred rounds of ammunition.

Back at home, she arranged a makeshift gun range in her yard on the hillside, and began spending time firing at targets. Those living nearby would have been able to hear her shooting.

What remained of the year then carried on, and that November, a woman named Darlene Hayes, who happened to work within the mental health unit of Milan's Cibola General Hospital, was making her way by the local post office when she saw something unusual. Jennifer was kneeling, alone, by the side of her truck in the parking lot, and seemed to be talking to herself. Concerned, Hayes approached, and asked if she was alright. Jennifer turned around to face her.

"They pray before they get in", she said.

She was speaking, she told her, of her brother and sister, who were kneeling on either side of her. Hayes had worked within the mental health service for over eighteen years, and felt that Jennifer needed urgent medical attention. She grabbed her cell phone, and dialled 911. "It seemed like she was acting delusional", she would later

say. "I wanted the police to make contact with her and hold her for 24 hours, so they could determine whether she needed a physician."

Hayes waited with her for a few minutes as she continued to pray, and then, expecting that police would arrive at any moment, left. Police, however, never responded, and would, perhaps strangely, later state that they had no record of Hayes's call at all.

Inside her house, Jennifer had kept a diary of over a hundred pages, detailing every perceived slight or insult she felt that she had received from those in Milan and California. Page after page of writings sat upon a table, detailing the names of those involved in a plot she believed she had come to uncover - the U.S. Postal Service and the Santa Barbara Police Department were conspiring against her, and were working with figures from a local medical facility to do it.

Jennifer's neighbours, meanwhile, had become increasingly worried, and for some of those living in Milan it was as if she had arrived, suddenly and from nowhere, to make their lives miserable. Some would cross the street to avoid her, and nobody, it seemed, even knew anything about her. Whether she had intended to or not, she had come to alienate herself from almost everybody in town, and seemed to be constantly ranting and screaming. Some of those living nearby were becoming afraid of her.

"The passion of her anger was hard to describe," one would later say. "It was so frightening."

New Year came and went, and Jennifer, now 44 years old, made her way north-west to a local auto repair shop in Milan. She had shaved her head, but had missed parts, and patches of long hair still hung to her shoulders. She had 'freshly cut tufts of hair' on her shirt, and shop owner John Phillip was surprised when he saw her. She had spoken to him before, and told him of how the Postal Service had mistreated her. She wanted them to 'pay', he would remember, but had never seemed to be threatening violence. By this point, like just about everyone else in the village, John was aware of Jennifer's problems.

“I’m going to be gone for a while”, she said.

The rest of the month passed by, and on the evening of Monday, the 30th of January 2006, back over in Goleta, it had been an unusually warm and clear day. It was typically a hot and dry, Mediterranean climate all year round, but due to its geography between the coastline and the Santa Ynez mountains, the area was also prone to hot winds rushing down from the 4000-foot peaks above.

Beverly Graham, who had been Jennifer’s neighbour before she moved to Milan, was at home, and with long-term boyfriend Eddie Blomfield elsewhere that day she was preparing to spend the evening by herself. Outside, the streetlights glowed, and it was a couple of hours since the sun had set.

Meanwhile, however, at the back of the house, Jennifer was climbing over the yard fence. She’d driven the twelve hours from Milan in one go, and had crossed the entire state of Arizona to get there. She approached an unlocked sliding door with her handgun drawn, let herself into the house, and found Graham inside her living room. She hadn’t seen her in nearly two and a half years. She raised the gun, shot her twice in the head, and killed her. It was Goleta’s first murder since 1992. She’d also torn out chunks of her hair, and left a smashed pair of glasses with the bloodstains on the floor.

She got back into her truck, and headed for the Distribution Center; and as nine o’clock approached, she turned east from Storke Road and made her way along the driveway to the employee parking lot. If she had still worked there, her shift would have been about to start.

The site was surrounded by a chain link fence, that had been topped with barbed wire - a security pass needed to be swiped at the barrier to go any further, but she didn’t have one. Another car was coming. The barrier raised, she tailgated it through, and headed inside.

On entering she turned right, and then backed her truck into a space around a hundred feet from the employee entrance. Adjacent

to it stood a break room, and a window gazed out into the parking lot, but like at the barrier, a pass was needed to gain access to the building. She could see a man walking through the cars. He was headed for the entrance, and was about to pass her. She stepped out of her truck, drew the gun, and demanded his security card. He handed it over immediately.

“OK”, she said. “Now get out of here.”

He took off running, and Jennifer turned to face 37 year-old Ze Fairchild, who was unaware of what had just happened, and was getting out of her car only metres away. She walked until she stood directly behind her, raised the gun, and shot her in the back of the head. She then turned to her right, took aim at 28 year-old Maleka Higgins, and killed her too. Looking towards the building she saw 42 year-old Nicola Grant, standing only metres from the employee entrance. She fired multiple rounds, shot her in the head, and Grant fell immediately to the floor. Jennifer headed for the entrance.

Inside the employee break room, two workers heard what sounded like gunfire, and ran to the window. From where they were, they couldn't see what had happened, but the shooting, if that was what it was, seemed to have stopped. Jennifer passed in front of the window, turned towards them, and smiled. She walked on to the front door, swiped the security card, and entered the building. Inside, around eighty people were working amidst the roar of the machinery.

She turned, first, right, and then left; into a hallway that led towards the main area of the facility. The machines had drowned out the noise from the parking lot. Seeing 44 year-old postal supervisor Charlotte Colton she shot her once, paused for a moment, and then shot her twice again.

She ejected the magazine from the gun and threw it to the floor, reloaded with a new one, and pulled back the slide to chamber the first round. She was heading back to her old work station. A co-worker grabbed Colton, and dragged her towards the entrance doors to get out of the way.

52 year-old Lupe Schwarz had been stood by her work station, and probably saw her coming. Jennifer fired four rapid shots, and killed her. Postal worker Robert Tantangelo jumped to his feet to see what was happening, and saw a co-worker grab hold of a woman sat nearby him. He was frantically pushing her towards an exit door, and was trying to catch everyone's attention.

"Run!", he shouted. Sat at the end of the hallway with his back turned, however, Dexter Shannon was listening to music through his headphones, and was unaware of what was happening. Jennifer left Lupe Schwarz where she was, and began to walk directly towards him. Back in 2001, he had reported her behaviour to supervisors, and the scene that followed had had her locked into a psychiatric unit. Within the writings left inside her home, Dexter was also one of the names that she had mentioned repeatedly - for plotting against her with the U.S. Postal Service. People were screaming, and running frantically for the exits. She walked the hallway until she stood directly behind him, raised the gun, and shot him in the back of the head.

Meanwhile, only minutes away, Officer Clay Turner of the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department was taking the opportunity to eat before his shift was due to start, and had just arrived at a nearby restaurant with three other S.B.S.D. officers. Over at the Distribution Center, however, someone had escaped and dialled 911, and the call crackled across police radio. To the alarm of those inside the restaurant they jumped to their feet, and ran immediately for the door. They would be there quickly, and Turner had an AR-15 in his car.

An AR-15 (or, rather, AR-15-style) rifle is a .223-caliber, low-recoil semi-automatic firearm, based upon the design of the *Armalite Rifle (AR) 15*; an American-made military rifle manufactured between 1959 and 1965. Having only been in business for five years, financial difficulties had led Armalite to sell the design to gun-makers Colt in 1959, and Colt, since, have produced a number of increasingly updated and modified variants - for the military, law enforcement and

civilian markets, and marketed as Colt AR-15s. There are between five and ten million of them within the United States, and the National Rifle Association considers them to be ‘America’s Rifle’. Armalite went out of business in the 1980s.



With a 30-round detachable magazine, interchangeable barrels, pistol-style grip and collapsible stock, to reduce the length of the gun, AR-15-style rifles are also considered within most U.S. states to be an *assault* weapon; defined by the U.S. Department of Justice as ‘semi-automatic firearms with a large magazine of ammunition that were designed and configured for rapid fire and combat use’. Other features can include threaded gun barrels, to screw in ‘silencers’ or flash suppressors, laser sights, features to prevent the gun from overheating, or even mounts for bayonets and grenade launchers.

A standard-issue rifle for many police forces, AR-15-style rifles have also historically been the weapon of choice for numerous murders and mass shootings.

Turner raced along the driveway from Storke Road, got through the barrier, and alongside the three officers from the restaurant headed immediately into the parking lot. People were rushing from the building, and running frantically by him for the driveway to get out of the facility. “They were in absolute panic”, he would remember; “They had lost it, there was no stopping them.”

He got out of the car, and immediately saw Nicola Grant. She lay on the sidewalk facing him, with her eyes wide open, but was clearly dead. Bits of information were blaring from police radios, but the frantic reports of fleeing survivors had given conflicting information. Some had even thought that the shooter was a man. Turner glanced back across the car park, and for the first time saw

the bodies of Ze Fairchild and Maleka Higgins. With the other three officers behind him he headed for the entrance, and in a defensive diamond formation they made their way into the building.

On passing through the door they immediately found Charlotte Colton, who had been dragged from where she fell. She'd been shot in the head and was critically injured, but was still breathing. Bullet casings lay scattered on the floor, and ahead of them stood the corridor that ran into the main warehouse. The roar of the machinery was constant, and through it, from somewhere, a phone was incessantly ringing.

Turner found himself having to make a decision. His active shooter training dictated that they were to immediately locate the shooter, but they had no idea if the killer was still at large, had fled the scene, or was even still alive. It was thought that the four victims they had found might have been the only ones, and from where they stood, nothing seemed to be moving inside the warehouse. Nobody was *actively* shooting, and no reports of gunfire were coming in from anywhere else.

Any threat presented by the warehouse seemed outweighed by the urgent needs of those they had already found, and so he made the decision to retreat the team back to the doorway, and immediately called for four ambulances and a Special Weapons and Training (SWAT) team. Highly trained police marksmen, SWAT are heavily armed, and trained specifically for hostage situations, armed confrontations and gun violence.

Police units were arriving quickly, and under cover from Turner and his team Charlotte Colton was loaded into an ambulance, then rushed immediately to Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, around six miles away.

Ze Fairchild, Maleka Higgins and Nicola Grant were dead. People were still running from the building, and were being rushed across Storke Road to the safety of a nearby fire station. More units continued to arrive, and a SWAT team were on their way. Calls were

still coming in to 911, but there were no longer reports of shots being fired.

By 12:30 a.m. it had been quiet for hours, and strike teams were still yet to enter the building. One man dialled 911 to tell police that he was hiding inside, and was evacuated across Storke Road to the fire station. Another ninety minutes then passed, and at two o'clock in the morning, some five hours after the first 911 call had been received, the SWAT team finally made their way in.

Heading for the warehouse they quickly discovered the body of Lupe Schwarz, and on looking towards the end of the hallway, could see Dexter Shannon. Jennifer lay face-down on the floor between them, in a pool of blood, and with a self-inflicted gunshot wound to her head. The gun was gripped tightly in her hand, and her fingers had to be pried from the trigger to retrieve it. The next round was loaded, and it was ready to fire.

Eddie Blomfield discovered the body of his long-term girlfriend, Beverly Graham, the next morning; and police were able to match the shell casings retrieved from her living room to those found inside the Distribution Center. The following year, he would be arrested alongside his sister, and an accomplice, for forging Beverly's will in a botched attempt to steal \$750,000 from her estate.

At the Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, Charlotte Colton died of her injuries two days after the shooting. The Distribution Center reopened for business the same day. Counselling sessions were offered to employees, but the U.S. Postal Service would commission a report - declaring that if one was to consider the **ten** shootings that had taken place within their facilities between 1986 and 1998, the Post Office 'was still a pretty safe place to work.'

"It was a model facility before", they would state, on addressing criticism that there had not been a security guard at the site; "It continues to be a model facility today. There was no reasonable need to have security there."

In all, seven people had been murdered, and Jennifer's suicide brought the death toll to eight. Some news outlets would compare what had happened to other shootings from within living memory, and would take particular interest in those that had happened in postal facilities. The last one had been almost eight years earlier, in Texas, when 27 year-old Maceo Yarbrough shot a female co-worker to death after arguing with her in a break room. The last active shooter situation had been in August of 1986 - when postal worker Patrick Sherrill opened fire at his workplace in Edmond, Oklahoma. Like Jennifer, he had been 44 years old, and after murdering fourteen people and wounding six others, killed himself.

Interestingly, by the south end of Storke Road, Goleta's neighbouring community of Isla Vista would also see an active shooter in 2014 - when 22 year-old Elliot Rodger murdered three people from his moving car after stabbing three men to death in his apartment. Fourteen others had been injured - seven had been shot, and another seven had been run over. A frequenter of far-right websites, Rodger had written a 107,000-word manifesto, and posted numerous videos online to complain that he had been rejected by society and women weren't interested in him. After crashing into a parked car, he shot himself in the head.

What happened inside the Distribution Center was the worst American workplace shooting ever carried out by a woman, and the worst by anybody nationwide in over two and a half years - in Mississippi, on the 8th of July, 2003, 48 year-old Douglas Williams had similarly killed six co-workers, and then himself, with a shotgun inside a Lockheed Martin manufacturing plant. Nineteen non-workplace active shooter incidents, however, had taken place since then.

Even after the investigation into the shootings was completed, police authorities and the U.S Postal Service would refuse to disclose all but the most minor details of Jennifer's past. The content of her

writings would also remain confidential, along with other recovered evidence, and with the passing of time, and dozens of subsequent mass killings, the Goleta postal shootings soon began to fade from the headlines.

For the next four years, every single active shooter in the United States - sixty of them - would be a man.

Public Mass Shooting / Active Shooter Incidents

March 14th, 2006 – October 10th 2007

Date	Location	Shooting Scene	Perpetrator
Mar-14	Reno, NV	Middle School	James Newman
Mar-25	Seattle, WA	House Party	Kyle Huff
Jun-25	Denver, CO	Workplace	Michael Ford
Jun-28	Seattle, WA	Synagogue	Naveed Afzal Haq
Aug-24	Essex, VT	Houses, E. School	Christopher Williams
Aug-30	Hillsborough, NC	High School	Alvaro Castillo
Sep-29	Cazenovia, WI	High School	Eric Hainstock
Oct-02	Bart Township, PA	Amish School	Charles Roberts, IV
Oct-09	Joplin, MO	Middle School	Thomas White
Feb 12 07	Salt Lake City, UT	Shopping Mall	Sulejman Talovic
Feb-12	Philadelphia, PA	Workplace	Vincent Dortch
Mar-15	Signal Hill, CA	Workplace	Alfonso Mendez
Apr-16	Blacksburg, VA	University Campus	Seung Hui Cho
Apr-29	Kansas City, MO	Shopping Mall	David Logsdon
May-19	Moscow, ID	Court, Church	Jason Hamilton
Aug-08	Perrysburg, OH	Workplace	Calvin Neyland, Jr.
Aug-30	Bronx, NY	Workplace	Paulino Valenzuela
Oct-04	Alexandria, LA	Law Office	John Ashley
Oct-07	Crandon, WI	House Party	Tyler Peterson
Oct-08	Simi Valley, CA	Workplace	Robert Beccera
Oct-10	Cleveland, OH	High School	Asa Coon

During this 576-day period there were 21 incidents recorded, averaging one every 27.4 days. 100% of the perpetrators were male. 47.6% were white, 19.0% were Black, 19.0% were Asian, and 14.3% were Hispanic. The average age of the perpetrator was 31.0 years.

42.9% killed themselves, 19.0% were killed by police, and 38.1% were arrested.

Age	Weapon(s)	Killed	Wounded	Outcome
14	Handgun	0	2	Arrested
28	Rifle, Shotgun, Handgun	6	2	Suicide
22	Handgun	1	5	Killed
30	2 Handguns	1	5	Arrested
26	Handgun	2	2	Arrested
19	2 Rifles, Shotgun	1	2	Arrested
15	Rifle, Handgun	1	0	Arrested
32	Rifle, Shotgun, Handgun	5	5	Suicide
13	Rifle, Handgun	0	0	Arrested
18	Shotgun, Handgun	5	4	Killed
44	Rifle, Handgun	3	1	Suicide
68	Handgun	0	3	Suicide
23	2 Handguns	32	17	Suicide
51	Rifle	2	8	Killed
36	2 Rifles	3	3	Suicide
43	2 Handguns, 2 Rifles	2	0	Arrested
44	Handgun	1	2	Arrested
63	Handgun	2	3	Killed
20	Rifle	6	0	Suicide
29	Handgun	1	2	Suicide
14	2 Handguns	0	4	Suicide

42.9% of perpetrators carried and used one weapon only – 33.3% used a handgun, and 9.5% used a rifle. 57.1% of perpetrators carried multiple weapons. Handguns were the most common weapon, and were involved in 81.0% of incidents. Not counting the perpetrator, the average number of fatalities per incident was 3.5, and the average number of wounded survivors was 3.3.

In the time since Goleta, some six weeks had initially passed without an active shooter event, but the 398 days that followed had seen a total of thirteen, resulting in an average of one every 30.6 days. Fifty-seven people had been killed, and another forty-eight wounded, but thirty-two of those deaths had taken place within a single incident. On the morning of Monday, April 16th 2007, 23 year-old student Seung Hui Cho had walked into the Norris Hall building of Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia, and committed the worst mass shooting in American history.

A senior undergraduate at Virginia Tech, Cho had immigrated from South Korea to the United States at eight years old, and, having received his green card, was a permanent U.S. resident. His parents ran a dry cleaning business in a suburb of Washington, D.C. He had been diagnosed, however, as ‘severely depressed’, and his often strange behaviour had long concerned many of those that knew him. He seemed ‘frail’, it would be reported, ‘shy’, ‘wary of physical contact’, and suffered from selective mutism – an anxiety-related disorder that prevented him from speaking in certain situations or to certain people. Throughout middle school and high school his parents had repeatedly sought therapy for him, and on December 13th, 2005, two years after enrolling at the university, he had been taken by police to a psychiatric hospital in New River Valley, Virginia. On being detained there overnight doctors had deemed him ‘mentally ill’, ‘in need of hospitalization’, and ‘an imminent danger to himself and others’, but he was released the following day after appearing before a Virginia Special Justice at a commitment hearing. He ‘presented an imminent danger’, the judge declared, but was **not** committed to a psychiatric institution. Instead, he was ordered to receive outpatient psychological treatment, but would never do so, as the court, university and community officials all seemingly failed to follow up on the court order.

Meanwhile, however, a number of professors at Virginia Tech had complained that his writings and behaviour were ‘disturbing’, and

university officials had received multiple complaints that he was ‘stalking and harassing’ two girls on campus with ‘annoying messages’ and unannounced visits to their rooms. Some had become concerned with his online behaviour, in which he would regularly threaten to kill himself, and on one occasion he would seem to have set fire to his dormitory, but with no specific threats having been made police were reportedly reluctant to get involved. One teacher, concerned for her own safety, had had him removed from her class after finding him to be ‘menacing’, and had arranged a code word with staff members that would lead them to call security. He was often ‘intimidating’, it would be said, ‘arrogant’, and ‘could be quite obnoxious’, but was also ‘extraordinarily lonely’ and without any friends.

Living in student accommodation at Harper Hall, around a mile south of Norris Hall, Cho had risen early on the morning of the massacre, left his room, and at 06:45am made his way east to the student dormitory next door. After loitering by the main entrance for some thirty minutes he had then made his way inside, walked through the building, and entered the room of 19 year-old freshman Emily Hilscher. A brief confrontation had taken place, before he drew a handgun and shot her repeatedly; then murdered a 22 year-old man named Ryan Clark when, alarmed by the gunfire, he came running to Hilscher’s aid.

Why exactly he did it is unclear. Some would later suggest that he had been ‘infatuated’ with her, or that he and Hilscher had had some sort of ‘romantic dispute’, but it would seem that the pair had neither met nor spoken to each other before that morning and Clark, likewise, would appear to have been a stranger. Regardless, leaving Hilscher to die three hours later Cho left the scene and headed back to his room, changed his clothes, and deleted his email account. He removed the hard drive from his computer and then, as emergency units responded to the scene next door, made his way east to a nearby post office. At 09:01am he mailed a package to *NBC* news, containing a 1,800-word manifesto in which he repeatedly expressed his hatred

of ‘rich kids’, ‘debauchery’ and the ‘deceitful charlatans’ on campus. He had included 29 photographs of himself, and 27 video clips that he would appear to have recorded over the six days prior. In them, he looked directly into the camera, stated that he would ‘no longer run’, and praised Columbine killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold as ‘martyrs’. Often reading from a sheet of paper, he talked somewhat incoherently, and complained of being ‘crucified’, but to whom exactly he was talking would never be determined.

“Thanks to you”, he said, “I die like Jesus Christ - to inspire generations of the weak and the defenceless people... You had a hundred billion chances and ways to have avoided today, but you decided to spill my blood. You forced me into a corner, and gave me only one option. The decision was yours. Now you have blood on your hands that will never wash off.”

With almost two and a half hours having passed since the murders of Hilscher and Clark he arrived at Norris Hall at 09:40am with a backpack, inside which were a number of heavy duty chains, padlocks, two semiautomatic handguns, and almost four hundred rounds. Having **not** been committed involuntarily to a mental institution, he had acquired his weapons and ammunition legally. He entered the building, chained the three main entrance doors shut behind him, and then placed a note upon one of them that claimed a bomb had been wired to it. Any attempts to open the door, it lied, would cause it to explode. He then made his way to the second floor, loaded his handguns, and for the next ten minutes walked between various classrooms, shooting first at those inside from the doorways, before walking between the desks and chairs to execute those taking cover. Never saying a word, he returned periodically to the hallway to reload, and re-entered a number of classrooms multiple times.

In total, twenty-seven students were murdered, along with five staff members, and twenty-eight of those killed had been shot in the head. Twenty-three others had been wounded – seventeen by gunfire, and six by jumping from the windows to escape. Among the dead was

76 year-old Professor Liviu Lebreescu who, born in Romania, had been imprisoned in a Nazi labour camp during the Second World War and had survived the Holocaust.

The first 911 call was received at 09:42, and when a SWAT team then burst into the building eight minutes later Cho heard them coming, raised one of his guns to his head, and killed himself. With 203 rounds remaining, it would be stated, he had been ‘well prepared to carry on’.

The massacre at Virginia Tech attracted enormous media attention, and the following Friday, the 20th, was declared to be a statewide day of mourning by Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine. Prayer vigils took place at churches across the United States, and a moment of silence was held that noon. Disturbed by the ease at which Cho had acquired his weaponry, calls were soon being made for the Democratic Congress to take action on gun laws, and push for what was being referred to as ‘common sense gun restrictions’, but it quickly seemed that, in the face of ‘the pro-gun lobby’s political power and the voters who support gun rights’, those in a position to act would be reluctant to do so. ‘Lawmakers’ positions (were) completely entrenched’, it would be declared, and any elected official ‘(moving) to regulate firearms’ would ‘(risk) losing critical supporters’. When asked, the day after the shooting, if the massacre ‘would change the political debate on gun control’, Democratic Representative Charlie Rangel had ‘sounded completely powerless’.

“I asked that question in a group of Democrats today,” he ‘sighed’; “and the people that I expected to say no, said ‘No’...it’s a regional thing, it’s a cultural thing and it’s a sad thing, but it’s some type of cult...Don’t touch; don’t take the gun from my dead, cold hands...and I don’t understand it, but obviously there is a political difference about that.”

The National Rifle Association, meanwhile, were quick to dismiss any debate on gun control, as it was ‘a time for people to

grieve, to mourn, and to heal', they said via their website - and 'not a time for political discussions or public policy debates'. With their annual convention underway that week in St. Louis, Missouri, Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre would state that it was in fact time, instead, to 'rally for the Second Amendment'; with 'a show of force by gun owners to the enemies of freedom everywhere', as 'anti-gunners' were 'doing everything they (could) to chip away at your rights'.

"We're pushing for Castle Doctrine laws across the country", he said. "We're pushing for legislation that ensures (gun confiscations) will never be repeated in this country. We're pushing to protect our rights to protect ourselves, even against anti-gun employers who want to leave you defenceless to and from work...we're pushing to protect and promote our freedoms, and we won't stop pushing until we've won."

Eight days after the massacre, the NRA's Institute for Legislative Action would declare that the 'call for stricter laws against guns', in a nation with an estimated 210 million guns in private hands', 'surely (deserved) a prize for sheer stupidity'. The lack of action regarding Cho's mental health problems had been to blame, they said, along with an increase in violent imagery on television and 'other means of communication'; which, 'in recent decades, in deference to the First Amendment', had created an "'anything goes" mood' in America that carried with it, 'inevitably, the risk that occasionally unstable individuals will choose to go much too far'.

The 'unpalatable truth', they said, 'is that, as a practical matter, there is little we can do to prevent tragedies like Virginia Tech'. The 232 days that had followed, meanwhile, had seen eight others take place, at an average of one every 29 days, and another fifteen people had been killed.