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Review of *Tower Sniper: The Terror of America's First Active Shooter on Campus*, by Monte Akers, Nathan Akers & Dr. Roger Friedman, PhD.

Houston, Texas: John M. Hardy Publishing Co, 2016

Tower Sniper: The Terror of America's First Active Shooter on Campus is a thorough and chilling account of the events leading up to and following the massacre wrought by America's first campus shooter, Charles

Whitman, in Austin, Texas, on August 1st, 1966. The blow-by-blow account of the event, reported by Monte and Nathan Akers, is gripping. What gives this book added value and makes it a uniquely valuable contribution—and one that moves our country toward greater understanding and healing following acts of shattering violence—are the chapters by psychologist Roger Friedman.

In the book's opening chapter Friedman offers a memoir of his friendship with one of the shooter's victims, Paul Sonntag. Through this beautifully crafted chapter, where he recounts not only the devastating effect of the loss on Paul's family, but its shaping reverberation through his own life, we are offered an up-close sense of how such a loss devastates not only the immediate family of a victim, but his friends and the world beyond.

The second of Friedman's chapters offers a deep, nuanced psychological analysis of the motives and psychology of Whitman himself. This analysis, which refuses simplistic explanations the media and public may prefer, helps us better understand the behavior of psychopathic killers. Friedman explains how a personality-disordered individual filled with rage but normal in appearance may, in response to a stressful event, if he has ready access to weapons, be driven to homicidal suicide by proxy. Friedman's clearly written diagnostic formulation may help mental health professionals, police, and all of us be better equipped to watch for danger signs.

The psychologist's third chapter documents the history of mass shootings in America—more than 70 since 1966, the effects of trauma on the brain, and the unwitting psychological damage done the survivors and the whole Austin community due to a 40-year absence of public acknowledgement of the event. Friedman presents here a powerful testament to the vital importance of providing traumatized communities with an empathic response that supports conversation about the event as well as a dedicated physical memorial that affords “mourning, memorializing, and honoring.” If healing is to occur in communities subjected to lethal violence, they “desperately need a communal, safe, and personally validating process to grieve their losses and celebrate those who risked their lives to help them.”

How can we prevent violent rampages? Where do mental health treatment and gun control fit in? How may traumatized individuals and communities recover? How can our country best support and treasure human life? This book will promote fruitful and informed discussion of this issue of ever more urgent concern in our country.

-Sara Mansfield Taber