

RAMMPAGE



The Bakersfield Californian

BARRY GUTIERREZ / AP

Tom Sullivan, center, embraces family members outside Gateway High School, where he has been searching frantically for his son, Alex Sullivan, who celebrated his 27th birthday by going to see "The Dark Knight Rises" at the theater where a gunman opened fire early Friday in Aurora, Colo.



James Holmes, 24

Batman screening turns into real-life horror as gunman opens fire on packed theater, kills 12

BY P. SOLOMON BANDA AND THOMAS PEIPERT
The Associated Press

AURORA, Colo.

As the new Batman movie played on the screen, a gunman dressed in black and wearing a helmet, body armor and a gas mask stepped through a side door. At first he was just a silhouette, taken by some in the audience for a stunt that was part of one of the summer's most highly anticipated films.

But then, authorities said, he threw gas canisters that filled the packed suburban Denver theater with smoke, and, in the confusing haze

between Hollywood fantasy and terrifying reality, opened fire as people screamed and dove for cover.

At least 12 people were killed and 58 wounded — 11 critically — in one of the deadliest mass shootings in recent U.S. history.

"He looked like an assassin ready to go to war," said Jordan Crofter, a moviegoer who was unhurt in the attack early Friday, about a half-hour after the special midnight opening of "The Dark Knight Rises."

The gunman, identified by police as 24-year-old James Holmes, used a military-style semi-

automatic rifle, a shotgun and a pistol, stopping only to reload.

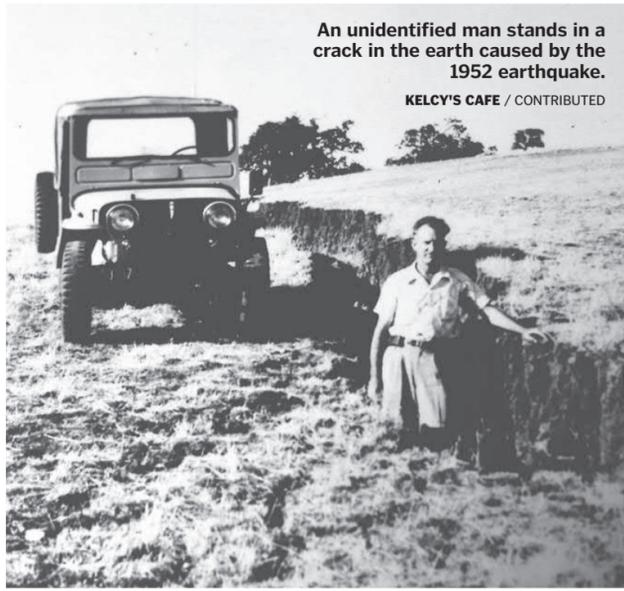
The suspect marched up the aisle in the stadium-style theater, picking off those who tried to flee, witnesses said. Authorities said he hit scores of people, with a few of the 70 victims suffering their injuries not by gunfire but in the ensuing chaos. At least one person was struck in an adjacent theater by gunfire that went through the wall.

"He would reload and shoot and anyone who would try to leave would just get killed," said

Please see **SHOOTING / A4**

EARTHQUAKES OF 1952

'It sounded like a bomb going off'



An unidentified man stands in a crack in the earth caused by the 1952 earthquake.

KELCY'S CAFE / CONTRIBUTED

BY STEVEN MAYER
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The threat of atomic war was believed to be a clear and present danger to Americans in 1952. So when the earth itself heaved and shuddered and cracked open across Kern County that summer, many residents initially believed they were experiencing a

man-made Armageddon, the nightmare of nuclear war.

"There was a horrible sulfur smell that rose up out of the ground," remembers 81-year-old Margaret Wooden, "like the shaking was opening up cracks in the earth."

Just 21 at the time, Wooden worked for Bell Telephone. She and her husband lived in a group of "little government houses" near the

railroad tracks on Kentucky Street in east Bakersfield.

At 4:52 a.m. on July 21 — exactly 60 years ago today — the couple's early morning routine was shattered by the first of a series of powerful earthquakes that would change their lives and the character of their community for years to come.

The quake that morning was one of the largest ever recorded in the history of California. The temblor's estimated magnitude of 7.5 made it the state's most powerful since the great San Francisco quake of 1906.

"All of a sudden, it sounded like all the trains were colliding," Wooden remembers in vivid detail. "It was such a horrible sound, a roaring. The building shook."

"It was an experience I never want to live through again."

Some neighbors, still naked, ran terrified out into the street, their will to survive overriding any sense of modesty. There was talk of atomic war across the city.

A mysterious red-orange glow and fiery flashes in the sky to the southwest only added fuel to the rumors.

"I remember it was fairly dark and all the neighbors came out," remembers Bakersfield resident Donna Marquez, who was only 9 at the time.

"We were kind of up on a hill and as you looked toward the south there were these huge flashes of light in the sky," she remembers. "And of course — I'm sure I heard this from

Please see **EARTHQUAKE / A6**

ABOUT THESE STORIES

This is the first of a two-part series on the 60th anniversary of the earthquakes that struck Kern County in the summer of 1952.

SUNDAY: Downtown Bakersfield was forever changed by the temblors that, in a matter of seconds, made rubble out of brick and mortar. Includes an interview with a Caltech seismologist and a map of Kern County's immense maze of earthquake faults.

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