

# The Sad Procession Begins

First Funerals Held For Connecticut Shooting Victims

BY ALLEN G. BREED AND HELEN O'NEILL  
Associated Press

NEWTOWN, Conn. — Opening a long and almost unbearable procession of grief, Newtown began laying its dead to rest Monday, holding funerals for two 6-year-old boys — one a football fan who was buried in a New York Giants jersey and one whose twin sister survived the rampage.

Two funeral homes filled with mourners for Noah Pozner and Jack Pinto, the first of the 20 children killed in last week's school massacre to receive funerals. The gunman also killed six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary, and his mother in her home, before committing suicide.

A rabbi presided at Noah's service, and in keeping with Jewish tradition, the boy was laid to rest in a simple brown wooden casket with a Star of David on it.

"If Noah had not been taken from us, he would have become a great man. He would be a wonderful husband and a loving father," Noah's uncle, Alexis Haller, told mourners, according to remarks he provided to The Associated Press. Both services were closed to the news media.

Noah's twin, Arielle, who was assigned to a different classroom, survived the killing frenzy by 20-year-old Adam Lanza, an attack so horrifying that authorities could not say three days later whether the school would ever reopen.

Newtown, a community of 27,000 people, will face many more funerals over the next few days, just as other towns are getting ready for the holidays.



GENARO MOLINA/LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT  
People embrace at the funeral for Sandy Hook Elementary School student Jack Pinto at the Honan Funeral Home and Newtown Village Cemetery in Newtown, Connecticut, on Monday.

"I feel like we have to get back to normal, but I don't know if there is normal anymore," said Kim Camputo, mother of two children, 5 and 10, who attend a different school. "I'll definitely be dropping them off and picking them up myself for a while."

Beyond Newtown, parents nervously sent their children back to class in a country deeply shaken by the attack, and in a measure of how the tragedy has put people on edge, schools were locked down in at least four places.

As investigators worked to figure out what drove Lanza to lash out with such fury — and why he singled out the school — federal agents said he had fired guns at shooting ranges over the past several years but there was no evidence he did so recently as practice for the rampage.

At Jack's Christian service, hymns rang out from inside the funeral home, where the boy lay in an open casket in the Giants' star wide receiver Victor Cruz's No. 80 jersey. Jack was among the youngest members of a youth wrestling association in Newtown, and dozens of little boys turned up at the service in gray Newtown Wrestling T-shirts.

Ten-year-old Luke Wellman remembered a boy who loved football and wrestling and worshipped Cruz, who played in Sunday's game with "Jack Pinto 'My Hero'" written on one of his cleats.

Luke said: "I'm here to support my teammate and friend."

A mourner, Gwendolyn Glover, said the service carried a message of comfort and protection, particularly for other children. "The message was: You're secure

now. The worst is over," she said.

At Noah's funeral, the boy was described a smart, funny and mischievous child who loved animals, Mario Brothers video games and tacos.

"I will miss your forceful and purposeful little steps stomping through our house. I will miss your perpetual smile, the twinkle in your dark blue eyes, framed by eyelashes that would be the envy of any lady in this room," his mother, Veronique Pozner, told mourners, according to Haller.

"Most of all, I will miss your visions of your future. You wanted to be a doctor, a soldier, a taco factory manager. It was your favorite food, and no doubt you wanted to ensure that the world kept producing tacos," she said, evoking laughter from the crowd.

She closed by saying: "Momma loves you, little man."

## U.S. Students Return To Classes After Massacre

Lilly Rosell contemplated keeping her 7-year-old daughter at home on the first day of classes since the Connecticut elementary school massacre, but she ultimately decided, like so many other parents, there was only so much she could do to keep her daughter safe.

"I'm panicking here to be honest," Rosell, of Miami, said as she anxiously surveyed her daughter's campus. "It's now about being in the prayer closet a little more often."

Most of the nation fell back into the familiar, if newly raw, routine of dropping off children at school, all too aware that a mass shooting can happen anywhere, at any time.

Schools across the U.S. beefed up patrols and security plans were reviewed as teachers and students returned to class after a gunman stormed into Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., on Friday, killing 26 people and then himself. A handful of schools were locked down throughout the day as extra vigilant administrators and police responded to any report of suspicious activity.

At least three schools were on alert in Ohio after threatening comments were made on Facebook and Twitter. In Ridgefield, Conn., swarms of parents picked up their children and police were at each school after a report of a suspicious person at a nearby train station. In Philadelphia, officers rushed to a high school after security officers mistook a student's umbrella for a gun. And in Tampa, Fla., the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office questioned students after a bullet was found on a school bus.

## Rep. Scott Picked To Replace Sen. DeMint

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — The man who will become the South's first black Republican senator since Reconstruction said Monday his ascension in politics showed the evolution of his state and the nation.

Congressman Tim Scott was picked by fellow Republican Gov. Nikki Haley to take over the seat being vacated by Jim DeMint. Haley, a daughter of Indian immigrants who became South Carolina's first female and minority governor in 2010, acknowledged making history with her appointment, but she stressed that she picked Scott for his conservative values.

"It is very important to me as a minority female, that Congressman Scott earned this seat, he earned this seat for the person he is, for the results he's shown," she said. "He earned this seat for what I know he's going to do in making South Carolina and our country proud."

Scott, 47, will be sworn in Jan. 3 to replace DeMint, who announced earlier this month he would forgo the remaining four years of his term to lead The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

Scott's selection culminates a fast rise through South Carolina politics. Just four years ago, he was chairman of the Charleston County Council. The 2008 election made him the first black Republican in the South Carolina Legislature in more than a century, and in 2010, he won his seat in the U.S. House from his conservative coastal district with 65 percent of the vote.

## Syrian Vice President: Army Can't Defeat Rebels

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria's vice president has acknowledged that the army cannot defeat the rebel forces trying to topple the regime and called for a negotiated settlement to save the country from ruin.

The rare, candid comments by Farouk al-Sharaa, a longtime close aide to President Bashar Assad's family, suggested his embattled regime may be contemplating an exit strategy as rebel forces move closer to the capital Damascus. He spoke in an interview published Monday by Lebanese newspaper *Al-Akhbar*.

"I don't see that what the security forces and army units are doing will lead to a definitive victory," al-Sharaa was quoted as saying in the interview conducted in Damascus.

"All these opposition forces can only conclude the battle to topple the regime if their goal is to push the country into chaos and a cycle of violence that has no end," he added.

Al-Sharaa pushed for a negotiated political settlement that includes the formation of a national unity government with wide jurisdiction.

## AP Sources: New Obama Offer Moves Toward Boehner

BY DAVID ESPO AND JIM KUHNHENN  
AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama has agreed to curtail future cost-of-living increases for recipients of Social Security and softened his demand for higher taxes at upper income levels as part of accelerating talks with House Speaker John Boehner to avoid a "fiscal cliff," people familiar with the talks said Monday.

Speaking a few hours after Obama and Boehner met at the White House, these people said the president was now seeking higher tax rates beginning at incomes over \$400,000 for couples, down from the \$250,000 level that was a cornerstone of his successful campaign for re-election.

Obama's willingness to reduce future cost-of-living increases in Social Security and numerous other government programs marked a clear concession to Boehner, although it came with an asterisk. The president wants lower-income recipients to receive protection against any loss from scaling back future cost of living increases, these officials said.

Nor did Obama's offer include raising the age of Medicare eligibility from 65 to 67, a Republican goal that has drawn particularly strong objections from Democratic liberals.

Several officials also said during the day that Boehner's offer late last week to accept higher tax rates included provisions that would mean higher taxes on investment income and dividends earned by wealthy Americans.

The people who described the talks did so on condition of anonymity, citing the secretive nature of the discussions.

The maneuvering is aimed at reaching an agreement that

would include cancellation of a scheduled year-end hike in taxes for nearly all wage-earners as well as spending cuts at the Pentagon and in domestic programs across the government.

Economists inside and outside the government have warned that the combination of the two, set to begin at year's end, could send the economy into recession.

Other major issues are part of the negotiations. Without action by Congress, for example, long-term unemployment benefits will expire for millions at the end of the year, and doctors will face a cut in the payments they receive for treating Medicare patients.

Obama has also called for assistance for hard-pressed homeowners as well as fresh economic stimulus measures, and some Democrats want to include a sizeable amount of disaster aid in any legislation to offset the cost of Superstorm Sandy.

On another point, Obama's latest offer dropped his earlier proposal to extend a payroll tax cut due to expire at year's end.

At the White House, spokesman Jay Carney sidestepped when asked about curbing cost-of-living increases for

benefit programs. The president "is prepared to make tough choices. He also understands that his bill will not, as written, likely be what the final compromise, if there is one, looks like," he said.

"But he insists and will insist before he signed anything that there is the balance that he seeks that is fair and that seniors aren't bearing the burden so that the healthy bear less — those who can afford it most bear less."

A spokesman for Boehner declined comment on the tax proposals.


Obama and Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner met with Boehner and his top aides at the White House for less than an hour during the day. While neither side provided significant details, Republicans have made it clear in recent days that it is the president's turn to propose savings from Medicare and other benefit program following Boehner's agreement last week to let tax rates rise at incomes higher than \$1 million.

Officials familiar with the talks said that under the Ohio Republican's proposal, the top tax rate

on capital gains would go to 20 percent, up from the current 15 percent. The top rate on dividends also would climb, although it was not known what the new level would be, and the estate tax would also be adjusted to produce more government revenue.

Under current law, the top capital gains tax rate would rise to 20 percent automatically at the end of the year if the cuts enacted during George W. Bush's White House tenure were allowed to expire.

The tax on dividends would also rise. The estate tax would be 55 percent on estates after allowance for a \$1 million exemption.




## FOOD DRIVE

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan is hosting a food drive for the Yankton County Contact Center Food Pantry throughout the month of December.

Donations may be dropped off at 319 Walnut Street, Yankton.

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MORNING COFFEE  
WEEKDAYS MONDAY-FRIDAY

Tuesday, December 18

7:40 am The Center (Christy Hauer)

8:20 am MMC Athletic Training (Andrew Holzwarth)

8:45 am Dakota Museum (Crystal Nelson)

Wednesday, December 19

7:40 am Vermillion Chamber (Steve Howe)

8:20 am Hy-Vee Foods (Chef Staci)