



Written by [Beverly K. Eakman](#) on December 9, 2011

Virginia Tech Massacre #2: I Wanna Be Around When They Pick Up the Pieces

This time only two had been shot (as of 5 p.m., Thursday, December 8), including a campus security cop. The shooter is either dead or at large — law-enforcement officers are unsure at this time whether the second body found is the shooter's.



But as everyone knows, ever since [Columbine](#) in Littleton, Colorado, school shootings and other violent acts, such as rapes on school property, seemed to spur a rash of similar crimes, despite draconian security measures: *pro forma* backpack checks; random locker searches; lockdowns (reminiscent of a prison setting) at the merest suggestion of mayhem; police roaming rooftops; bans on any depiction that might resemble a gun, insignia, or even a patriotic hat; mandatory cellphones, distributed to students to alert them to the latest mayhem; and more. All for naught.

Meanwhile, child psychologists decreed old-fashioned discipline — the kind that used to be routinely dispensed by parents pre-1967 — verboten. Minors “deserved” privacy, after all: No checking under the bed or in the closet. No eavesdropping on children's telephone conversations, and certainly no “FBI-treatment” concerning a child's friends or whereabouts. All such activities were condemned as “paranoid” by the same psychologists. Media anchors who supported the same fashionable psycho-babble now can't seem to get enough of the latest atrocity.

As I listened to the non-stop rambling of news commentators both at the grocery store and on the way home, it hit me. I'm not sure why the old song “I Wanna Be Around (to Pick Up the Pieces)” popped into my head. I hadn't heard it in years, even though it had been a popular number in the days of Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, and others. The radio in my car wasn't playing music. Once home, I plunked the groceries on the floor, and dashed to the word processor. In a record-setting 20 minutes, I had penned the send-up already completed in my head, under a slightly revised title — a commentary that transcends Virginia Tech Massacre #2, to take in the larger issues behind the tragedy. Maybe it rings a bell with you, too. Here it is:

I WANNA BE AROUND (When They Pick Up the Pieces)

I wanna be around when they pick up the pieces
When the USA falls apart
Thanks to voters not quite as smart as tired.
When campaigners who will swear to be true



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To our Founders' philosophy
Then lead us to find
We'd been "had" all the time; wait and see...
Yeah, I wanna be around to see how they do it
When our populace finally splits
Let's see how the Congress flips, this time...
That's when patriots will discover that revenge is sweet;
They might even sit applaudin' from a front-row seat,
When a coup steamrolls the country
Like the Feds **stole** mine....

"I WANNA BE AROUND TO PICK UP THE PIECES," Original Lyrics 1959 (with apologies to Sadie Vimmerstedt and Johnny Mercer) ©2011 Beverly K. Eakman

Beverly K. Eakman began her career as a teacher in 1968. She left to become a science writer for a NASA contractor, then editor-in-chief of NASA's newspaper in Houston. She later served as a speech writer and research-writer for the director of Voice of America under the U.S. Information Agency, and two other federal entities, including the U.S. Dept. of Justice. She has since penned six books, scores of feature articles and op-eds covering education policy, mental-health, data-trafficking, science, privacy and political strategy. Her e-mail, a detailed bio, speaking appearances and links to her books can all be found on her website: BeverlyEakman.com.



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