



In this file photo, the chair dedicated to bombing victim Baylee Almon is pictured in the Field of Empty Chairs at the Oklahoma City National Memorial at dusk in Oklahoma City.



The field of empty chairs at the Oklahoma City National Memorial. — AP photos

Visiting the **Oklahoma bombing** memorial 21 years later

This month marks 21 years since the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995. The Oklahoma City National Memorial, built on the bombing site, provides a quiet space to reflect on the realities of violence and to renew personal hopes for peace at a time when acts of terror continue around the world. On a recent visit, I found myself reacting in different ways to the site's symbols and features. First, the chairs. There are 168 of them, one for each victim, set out in a field where the Alfred P Murrah Federal Building once stood. They're arranged in nine rows representing each floor of the building, and each chair is marked with the name of someone killed on that floor. Nineteen small chairs represent the children who died in the attack. I could hardly look

at the seats without seeing a man, woman or child in each one.

The long reflecting pool at the center of the memorial had a calming effect. It's designed to symbolize the event's limitless impact by reflecting all that has changed since the attack. When it happened, the Oklahoma City bombing was the worst act of terrorism that had ever taken place on US soil, a distinction that now belongs to 9/11. The moment of destruction in Oklahoma City is symbolized by the massive Gates of Time on either end of the reflecting pool.

The gates are marked with numbers representing the minute before and after the explosion that morning. The first, 9:01, represents the last minute of peace before the deadly strike. At the oth-

er end, 9:03 marks the beginning of recovery. For me, the gates drove home the reality of what happened. At a fence near the entrance, mourners and visitors leave written tributes, flowers, flags and other mementos. Perusing the display, I felt anger, then grief, then reluctant acceptance. As the gate inscription states: "May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity." — AP



In this photo, Mark Falgren, from left, Magnus Larsson, Lukas Graham Forchhammer and Kasper Daugaard of Lukas Graham pose for a portrait in Los Angeles. — AP

Denmark's Lukas Graham makes US mark with '7 Years'

Lukas Graham Forchhammer has an American dream. The Danish singer-songwriter from the pop-soul band Lukas Graham has topped charts in Europe and Australia, but he always hoped to reach audiences in the United States. "I've always wanted to release records in America. That's where I believe the music belongs and the style and the eclectic musical mix that we put together kind of belongs here," Forchhammer said.

His stateside breakthrough finally came in the form of the soulful "7 Years," which recently catapulted to No. 2 on Billboard's Hot 100. Forchhammer said performing the emotional pop ballad during his nearly sold-out North American tour has been immensely satisfying. "It was never really meant to be a huge success in Denmark because I didn't think people would get the lyrics quick enough." In a recent show in LA, he said, "I could see how the lyrics resonated immediately. I was blown away."

The band's self-titled, worldwide debut album came out April 1. (It was previously released in Europe.) Forchhammer credits his upbringing in Copenhagen's diverse hippie enclave Christiania for his eclectic sound. "Listening to all these different musical genres from all over the world and listening to my father's record collection, the Irish folk influences from home. Of course they're all in there somewhere hiding within the lyrics and melodies. But rap music was the biggest influence on my way of writing and my performing," he said.

Forchhammer is thrilled with his new-found US success, but has no interest in fame. "If it was up to me it would be nice not ever to get stopped on the street because we just do music. I didn't do this become a celebrity," he said while acknowledging his world may soon change. "We are No. 2 on Billboard. I don't think I can remain anonymous for that much longer. It was fun while it lasted. Very fun." — AP

New Zealand school musical ends with 2 boys in hospital

A high school musical in New Zealand got a little too real this week when a prop razor used in a throat-slitting scene ended up cutting the necks of two boys and sending them to a local hospital overnight. Students at Saint Kentigern College in Auckland were performing the opening night of Sweeney Todd before parents and other audience members Wednesday when things went badly wrong. Set in Victorian London, the musical depicts a barber who slits his customer's throats with a razor and uses the bodies to make meat pies.

The head of Saint Kentigern College, Steve Cole, told radio station Newstalk ZB the razor used in the show was real but had been bound in duct tape. He said he has no idea what went wrong during a scene midway through the Second Act. "It had been bound in Cellophane, bound in all sorts of things," he said. "It was very non-sharp, blunted, and had been through all sorts of health and safety checks. It was a very unfortunate mishap." He said the boys were released from hospital Thursday and were doing well.

"We've been keeping contact through the family and making sure the kids are OK," he told the radio station. Cole said a performance of the play scheduled for Thursday was canceled but he hoped the show could resume today. "Obviously without those particular props," he added. Police and health-and-safety officials are investigating the incident. — AP