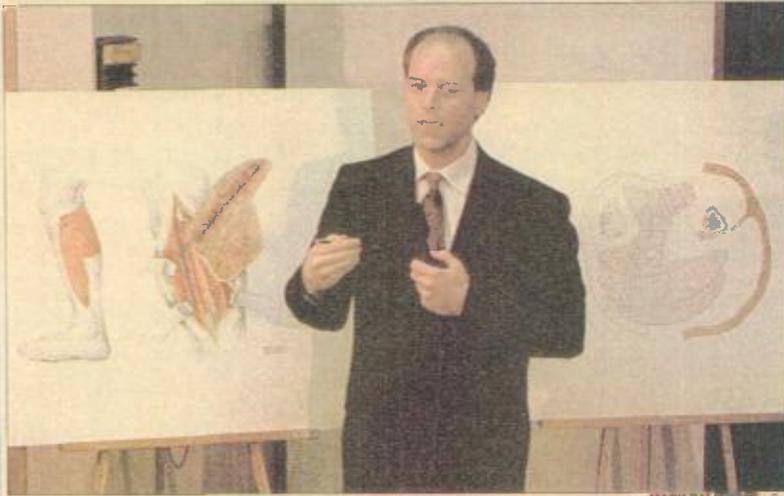


# SCHOOL SHOOTING: RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY



MARK ZALBESON/The Sun

Dr. Doug Hendricks, the microsurgeon who performed reconstructive surgery on Redlands Principal Richard Facciolo's jaw and neck, explains how the surgery was done at press conference Tuesday at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

## Surgeons take skin, bone from leg of principal to rebuild jaw

By DAVID WAHLBERG  
Sun Staff Writer

LOMA LINDA — Doctors removed skin and bone from gunshot victim Richard Facciolo's leg to reconstruct his shattered jaw in a surgery that was unheard of 20 years ago but common today.

Facciolo, the principal at Sacred Heart School in Redlands who was shot Jan. 23 by 13-year-old student John Sirota Jr., is speaking and eating just four weeks after the 14-hour operation. But he faces months of speech therapy and up to 10 more surgeries.

"He seems to be healing actually quite well," said Dr. Doug Hendricks, the Loma Linda University Medical Center microsurgeon who performed the jaw reconstruction Jan. 26. "But he still has a long way to go."



Facciolo

Hendricks told reporters at a press conference Tuesday that he and a team of doctors cut off most of Facciolo's left fibula, the smaller of two bones that connect the knee to the ankle, to create the new jaw.

They also removed a large slab of skin over Facciolo's left calf, as well as vessels, tissue and one of three leg arteries. Skin from his thigh was lifted and grafted over the leg wound. The thigh skin will slowly grow back.

Wedges were cut from the bone to allow doctors to bend it at 60-degree angles to make the jaw. Then the new jaw was fastened into place with plates and screws, and the skin was sewn around the mouth.

The key to providing a healthy jaw was to keep a blood supply intact, Hendricks said.

"It's very much like a kidney transplant," where arteries and veins are transplanted along with the kidney to keep it alive, he said.

Facciolo will require two to 10 more surgeries to refine the still-ragged jaw. That may take two years, Hendricks said.

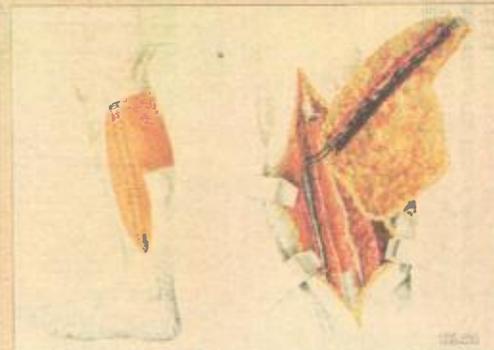
Some of the principal's facial muscles were destroyed and most of his teeth were blasted off. So his mouth will droop a little and he'll need dentures.

"But eventually, he'll look pretty normal," Hendricks said.

Facciolo will be able to walk without any problem, Hendricks said. "You can survive without ta-

### FACE-SAVING SURGERY

To reconstruct shooting victim Richard Facciolo's jaw, doctors cut out his left fibula — the smaller of two lower leg bones — and attached it to his mouth. The surgery, unheard of 20 years ago, has been done about 1,000 times worldwide.



1. With the fibula, skin, an artery, vessels and tissue were removed from the left leg to provide a constant blood supply for the new jaw.



2. Wedges were chipped from the fibula so doctors could bend it at 60 degree angles to form the jaw.

3. The new jaw was fastened into place with plates and screws, and the skin was sewn around the mouth.



Artist renderings Robert Harold Knabenbauer

SUN STAFF

fibula) and actually walk with little difficulty."

The jaw surgery has been done about 1,000 times worldwide, Hendricks said. It is becoming common for people who have

cancer of the tongue or jaw.

The operation has also been performed recently at San Bernardino County Medical Center, Redlands Community Hospital and Riverside General Hospital.