

IF HE'D BEEN AT WORK . . . FORMER PORTLANDER SAYS

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Author: DAVE HOGAN - of the Oregonian Staff | Page: A09 | Section: LOCAL STORIES

As a federal judge whose office face looks across the street at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building across the street in Oklahoma City, Wayne Alley felt lucky that he didn't go to his office Wednesday.

Alley, who was born and raised in Portland, had taken the rare opportunity to work at home.

``Of all the days for this to happen, it's absolutely an amazing coincidence," Alley said in a telephone interview from his home.

The judge said the bombing came just a few weeks after security officials had warned him to take extra precautions.

``Let me just say that within the past two or three weeks, information has been disseminated . . . that indicated concerns on the part of people who ought to know that we ought to be a little bit more careful," he said.

Alley, who started his law career in Portland, said he was cautioned to be on the lookout for ``people casing homes or wandering about in the courthouse who aren't supposed to be there, letter bombs. There has been an increased vigilance."

He said he was not given an explanation for the concern.

Asked if this might have just been a periodic security reminder, he said, ``My subjective impression was there was a reason for the dissemination of these concerns."

An FBI spokesman in Oklahoma told reporters during a news conference that he was not aware of any warning.

Only some members of Alley's staff were as lucky as he was Wednesday.

Some were in his suite of offices in the courthouse, which is across the street on the other side of the federal building from where the bomb exploded Wednesday.

Still, the force of the blast smashed the windows of his office, and one of his law clerks was injured by the flying glass.

Alley attended Washington High School in Portland and was a law clerk for an Oregon Supreme Court justice.

Despite the damage to his office, Alley said the destruction of a child care center in the federal building hit him hardest. He said his son and daughter-in-law in Oklahoma City had a baby 4 1/2 months ago, and they had considered using the facility before deciding on other child care.

``The thought that our grandchild might have been in there was the thing that was the most chilling about all of this," the judge said.