

## **Book Plot Parallels Bombing - Author is Oklahoma Governor's Brother**

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OKLAHOMA CITY - Just after the April 19 bombing of the federal building, Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating demanded to know whether his older brother, Martin Keating, had a decent alibi.

He was joking, of course. But there was a plausible reason to pose such a question: Martin Keating is the author of an

unpublished novel that not only involved the unique twist of terrorism based in Oklahoma, but also included a character named Tom McVay.

Even more eerily coincidental, Mr. Keating's key suspect in a series of terrorist incidents, Jack Stroud, is arrested by an alert Oklahoma Highway Patrol trooper who spots a speeding truck with a flickering taillight. The trooper does not immediately realize the significance of his detainee.

In real life, Oklahoma City's Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was pulverized by a fertilizer bomb, allegedly built by an anti-government radical named Tim McVeigh.

And it was Mr. McVeigh who just happened to be nabbed 90 minutes later by an alert state trooper who stopped him for speeding in a car without a license plate and jailed him for carrying a concealed weapon. The trooper was unaware for days of the magnitude of the arrest.

"It's wild," Martin Keating said of the parallels. "It's a fantasy, but it's spooky."

"It is just too unbelievable for words that the governor's brother has been predicting this for two years," added his agent, Lawrence S. Freundlich. "It's wildly coincidental, so much so that I got a little scared."

Martin Keating, a 53-year-old Tulsa lawyer and professional writer-turned-novelist, conceived the story line for *The Final Jihad* in 1988. He enlisted help from his brother Frank, a former FBI agent and U.S. attorney who then was a top Justice Department official. Frank Keating introduced his older brother to some key FBI personnel in Washington, including second-in-command Oliver "Buck" Revell, now retired and living in Dallas.

Martin Keating detailed the scenarios of his novel, inquired about their plausibility, then picked the brains of FBI experts to ensure Tom Clancy-style accuracy and legitimacy.

"It's Clancy without all the technical details," Mr. Keating said. "I don't want to teach you how to build a submarine."

As he wrote the manuscript, Mr. Keating said he repeatedly was forced to revise his story line - because fictional events he included became reality. His story included the fall of the Berlin Wall, demise of the Soviet Union, bombing of a major commercial building in New York and the crashing of a plane into the White House.

All eventually happened.

But the strangest coincidences involved the notion of terrorism in the heartland, in Oklahoma of all places. According to Mr. Keating and Mr. Freundlich, the setting was the primary reason the novel hadn't yet sold. In the minds of publishers, it wasn't believable that such an event could happen here.

Now, Mr. Freundlich said the manuscript is in the hands of five major publishers in New York. And it doesn't hurt that the author just happens to be the brother of Oklahoma's governor.

"I would never ask Frank to tout me or promote it," said Martin Keating, a former Houston resident who helped marshal the financing to make the 1978 movie *The Buddy Holly Story*. "We just don't operate like that."

Mr. Freundlich insists no such boost from the governor is necessary. He said the writing is so good, and the events so compelling, especially in light of the Oklahoma City tragedy, that it's publication is now a matter of when, not if.

He said he expects it to reach the bookstores between October and January.

Arnold Hamilton is chief of the Oklahoma bureau of *The Dallas Morning News*.

Caption:

PHOTO(S): Martin Keating (right), brother of Oklahoma

Gov. Frank Keating, is a lawyer and professional

writer-turned-novelist. ; PHOTO LOCATION: NR.