

Witnesses Confirm Explosives, Second Explosion

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By J.D. Cash and Jeff Holladay

Witnesses interviewed by the McCurtain Gazette have confirmed from first-hand experience that there were explosives in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building after it was wracked by the April 19 bombing — and that there were two separate explosions.

The Gazette reported in an exclusive copyrighted story on May 4 that Dr. Ray Brown, a geophysicist with the Oklahoma Geological Survey, had concluded from seismographic readings that the Oklahoma City federal building was demolished by not one but two separate explosions. The FBI, the ATF and other federal agencies have steadfastly maintained that the only explosion came from a rental truck loaded with ammonium nitrate fertilizer and fuel oil, and that the prime culprit is Timothy McVeigh.

But parents, grandparents and relatives of victims of the Murrah building's destruction are not so convinced. Some 10 days ago they presented a petition to members of their congressional delegation, asking for an investigation. Meanwhile as the Associated Press, the mainstream press and the national TV networks largely dismiss non-official scenarios as the perfervid imagination of conspiracy- and paranoia-driven government-haters, there is a growing number of witnesses taking issue with the "official" version,

One of the doubters recently appeared on the Chuck Harder Show, a syndicated radio talk show broadcast out of White Springs, Fla., and with 375 markets in the U.S., including Radio Station KTOK in Oklahoma City.

On June 15, the show featured freelance investigative reporter Pat Shannon of Florida who has been researching the Oklahoma City bombing since the day it occurred.

"I smell fish here and this story is not going to die, n predicted Shannon at the opening of the program. "There are too many witnesses that know too much. And enough independent investigators are working here to blow the lid off the thing... "The story has legs."

Referring directly to the articles published by the McCurtain Gazette, Shannon told the show's host, Chuck Harder, "They thought they saw a rat down here and...started and independent investigation."

Shannon also told of correspondent J.C. Cash interviewing Dick Miller, Oklahoma City assistant fire marshal, who admitted that high explosives were removed from the third floor of the Murrah building right after the blast.

When Shannon told Harder of the Associated Press and the state's largest newspaper ignoring the Gazette's exclusive, copyrighted May 4 story, Harder broke in, saying:

"Hold it! Hold it! Are you saying the wire service ignored a blockbuster like that?"

"That's right" Shannon said. "And the state's two largest papers and CNN did, as well."

Shannon told of interviewing a Vietnam war veteran who was trying to rescue people from the third floor of the Murrah building right after the bombing. The veteran told of at least a half-dozen ammunition rounds "zinging" past him from a large container of ammunition that had blown out of the burning cars outside. Added Shannon:

"This vet, who says he's been shot at enough to know what exploding bullets sound like, explained to me in the interview that he went on a national television show a few weeks ago, along with several other people. And he said that everything was going well in the taping of that program until he started telling the interviewer about having to dodge bullets while he was trying to help people on the third floor.

"Well," says Shannon, "...this guy tells me now that (this) portion of the show was never aired"

Shannon also quoted Jim Ferguson, an electrician and assistant Murrah building manager, who said that when the explosion occurred he was just across the street and "heard two blasts."

Shannon also quoted Ferguson as saying "My wife and mother-in-law were just a mile and a half away when they heard the first blast. And after turning to look in that direction, they saw dust and smoke rising, then felt and heard the second blast and witnessed a second plume erupt into the sky."

The Gazette also talked to several witnesses who told of being on the scene and of explosives being in the building. One was Brent Bloom, a University of Oklahoma graduate who was a VISTA volunteer at a homeless shelter just a few blocks from the Murrah building. Bloom, who works at the homeless shelter to get credits for a federal program that will help make him a doctor, said he rushed to the scene of the explosion as fast as he could.

He ran up to a police officer, who denied him access. But when Bloom explained that he had emergency first-aid training and knew CPR, the policeman allowed him in.

He crawled over rubble and instantly found himself in the day-care center. It was a scene of heretofore unimaginable horror.

Then, about an hour or more after Bloom had started recovering the dead and wounded, a fireman screamed that he had discovered a bomb.

"People began running from the room," Bloom said. Shortly afterward, men wearing the protective clothing of a bomb squad showed up. Later, he would be allowed to go back in.

But at least two more times, he said, there were similar events — discovery of a bomb or bombs ... fleeing the area ... leaving trapped victims behind while city and county bomb squads entered the facility to remove unexploded devices.

For Virgil Steele, another volunteer rescuer who has received numerous awards and citations for his heroism that day, the initial explosion was uncomfortably close to where he was working.

Steele was atop a nearby high-rise going up when the initial explosion just after 9 a.m. April 19 rocked the downtown area. It caused the steel frame on which he was working to sway "at least 3 feet," he said, and knocked him to the asphalt and gravel on the roof area.

Then he "heard and felt a second blast, very clearly," he said. In just minutes, Steele, too, was drawn to the Murrah building's day-care center. "No one knew about any truck bomb while we were in the building that first day," he said. "But we all knew that there had to be some kind of bombs that had gone off. So when a fireman exclaimed, "There's a bomb!" people got pretty shook up. I looked over and not 10 steps away was a cylindrical pipe may 18-inches long — sealed on both ends."

Pretty soon, he said, "here came a bunch of guys in their bomb protective suits and they took the thing away..." A similar incident was repeated later, he said.

A suburban Oklahoma City police officer, who arrived on the scene late on the morning of April 19, also told of bombs being carried away by the bomb squads. He would not consent to the use of his name.

Hoping to identify the body of a relative's small child while they were laid out near the day-care center, he jumped over a police crime tape and was starting into the day-care center when a fireman yelled, "Hey, idiot, that's a bomb!" Stunned, the officer looked to where the fireman was pointing — and saw a 2-ft. X 2-ft. X 2-ft. corrugated box surrounded by more crime tape.

Then the fireman yelled other warnings: "There's one over there and another over there! We're waiting for the bomb squads to come back from hauling off the others."

There is no doubt in the mind of one witness interviewed by the Gazette that there was a second blast at the Murrah building — and that it was very strong. Judy Hamilton Morse said she was in the ninth floor waiting room of U.S. District Judge Luther Bphanon in the Old Post Office Building, some 200 yards from the Murrah building.

The judge's secretary screamed, "It's a bomb!" as the blast erupted and glass was blown from a nearby window.

Then, with the initial blast still reverberating, the secretary stepped from around her desk — and was then picked up by a second blast and slammed all the way across the room...right at Morse's feet, some 12 feet from the secretary's desk. While she does not

specifically recall multiple explosions, the singularity of that event has convinced Morse that there was, indeed a powerful second bomb blast.