

# Sightings of John Doe No. 2: In Blast Case, Mystery No. 1

By JO THOMAS

**HERINGTON, Kan., Nov. 30**— Seven months after Timothy J. McVeigh and Terry L. Nichols were arrested in the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building, the prosecution's case against the two former Army friends is still haunted by the ghost of a mysterious third suspect who has never been found or identified.

In the days and weeks after a bomb shattered the building, killing 168 people, the shadowy figure that the authorities described then as John Doe No. 2 became the most hunted man in America, his features depicted in composite sketches circulated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

But while Federal officials are now saying little about John Doe No. 2 and are focusing their energies on building the case against the two men they have in custody, the mystery remains.

A half-dozen people said in interviews that they saw someone else in the company of Mr. McVeigh or Mr. Nichols, or both, in the days before the bombing on April 19.

These people, who said they also gave accounts to F.B.I. agents, offered somewhat varied descriptions of a third man, reporting sightings both in Oklahoma City on the day of the bombing, and in the two rural Kansas towns, Junction City and Herington, where Mr. McVeigh and Mr. Nichols spent time before the blast. This man bore no resemblance to Michael J. Fortier, who has pleaded guilty to weapons charges and has agreed to be a Government witness in the case.

It is unclear whether the man the witnesses have described is John Doe No. 2, who Federal agents say was with Mr. McVeigh in Junction City when he rented the Ryder truck used in the bombing. It is also unclear whether the witnesses have described the same person, or whether their descriptions are of different people who looked broadly similar.

Prosecutors and investigators now say their inquiry has turned up little concrete evidence the man ever existed. But the existence of witnesses who swear there is someone else -- coupled with the Government's own determined efforts in the wake of the bombing to hunt and capture John Doe No. 2 -- could have important consequences for the way the case against Mr. McVeigh and Mr. Nichols unfolds.

For defense lawyers, the suggestion of another suspect who has never been found offers an opportunity to poke holes in the Government's case. The Government's inability to explain away a suspect whom it introduced, lawyers say, raises questions about the possibility of a larger but as yet unseen conspiracy.

"It's strange that the official version has focused on Nichols and McVeigh, and that the Government is now busily engaged in denying all possibility that there could be anybody else," said Michael Tigar, who is defending Mr. Nichols. "That is inconsistent with the position the Government took to begin with."

## Two Defendants And a Specter

While the F.B.I. embarked on the biggest manhunt in American history, received 10,000 telephone tips and interviewed dozens of look-a-likes, it could not identify John Doe No. 2. But the Justice Department has never officially disavowed him or the possibility of a wider plot, and the indictment names as yet unidentified co-conspirators

Moreover, although the inquiry began with the assumption that several conspirators were involved, law-enforcement officials say the case has moved into a pretrial phase aimed at fortifying what the Government believes is already a strong case against the two defendants.

Prosecutors are also preparing to counter likely defense maneuvers such as the assertion that the Government may be trying to make Mr. McVeigh and Mr. Nichols into scapegoats because it has failed to explain the sightings of unidentified people in the company of the defendants.

Doubts have also been raised about the original eyewitness identification on which the composite sketches and manhunt for John Doe No. 2 were founded. Pvt. Todd Bunting, posted at Fort Riley, next to Junction City, said in July that he had been in the rental office the day after prosecutors say Mr. McVeigh rented the truck. Private Bunting, who has no connection to the bombing, said it was his face that witnesses had recalled for the composite sketches.

Federal investigators acknowledged the sketch's resemblance to Private Bunting, who was wearing a black baseball cap similar to the one shown in two of the drawings. But they have been careful not to disavow the witnesses who gave them the information for the sketches, because in a largely circumstantial case, prosecutors need the witnesses for their identification of Mr. McVeigh and for their testimony linking him to the truck.

But the authorities have additional reasons to believe there was another suspect. Early in the investigation, according to court papers, two witnesses at the Federal Building saw Mr. McVeigh and another man -- not Mr. Nichols, who was in Herington that day -- leaving the area of the building just before the blast.

In this part of Kansas, some residents have no doubt that another suspect exists, and is still at large. They saw him, they say, and they wonder why the Government cannot find him.

#### Comings and Goings At the Dreamland

On April 14, five days before the bombing, Mr. McVeigh checked into Room 25 of the Dreamland Motel in Junction City, 26 miles north of Herington. The next day, a Saturday, Mr. McVeigh used the name Bob Kling to call Elliott's Body Shop, a Ryder truck rental office in town, to reserve the truck that the Government says carried the bomb.

That night, Shane Boyd, 23, a helicopter mechanic who was also staying at the Dreamland, said he saw a bushy-haired man, who resembled the sketches of John Doe No. 2, in the parking lot near Mr. McVeigh's room. The man, Mr. Boyd recalled, was smiling.

Shortly after midnight, Connie Hood, 29, who lives in the Junction City area, drove into the parking lot to visit David King, a guest at the motel.

All the motel rooms open directly onto a narrow parking lot at ground level, and just as Mrs. Hood parked her car near Mr. King's room, she said, a man flung open the door of Room 23, next to Mr. King's, as if he were expecting someone. The man startled her, she said. Then he stepped back, pulling the door almost closed while still looking at her.

He had thick, dark hair, brushed back, and an olive complexion, and was about 5 feet, 9 or 10 inches, Mrs. Hood recalled. Later, when the sketches of John Doe No. 2 were published, she saw the resemblance, but the face was not identical, she said. The man she saw had fuller features.

After questioning Mrs. Hood, the F.B.I. took the hotel's records and dusted Room 23 for fingerprints. But Lea McGown the motel owner who lives on the premises, said she was absolutely certain that Room 23 was neither rented nor occupied that night, although it is possible, she said, that someone might have taken a key to have a look at the room and was coming out when Mrs. Hood arrived.

On Monday, April 17, prosecutors say Mr. McVeigh and John Doe No. 2 went to pick up the Ryder truck Mr. McVeigh had reserved. At 3 P.M. on Monday, Mrs. Hood again came to the motel to visit Mr. King, bringing her husband,

Donald, 30.

Just as the Hoods were pulling into the parking lot, they said, they had to wait for a large Ryder truck that was also pulling in to park. Mrs. Hood recalled seeing both doors of the truck's cab open, and she watched the driver, who she said was not Mr. McVeigh, walk into the motel office.

The driver, she said, was "a dark-headed guy." She added, "He had the same look and weight as the guy who came out on Saturday night."

Mrs. Hood went into Mr. King's room, while Mr. Hood waited outside in the parking lot. Within minutes, Mr. Hood said, a man who resembled the sketches of John Doe No. 2 came out of the motel office and got into the driver's seat of the truck. At about the same time, Mr. McVeigh came out of a room at the motel and got into the passenger's seat, Mr. Hood said. The men then drove off.

Mr. Hood described the man as about 5 feet, 9 inches, with dark, brown hair brushed straight back and an olive complexion.

Court documents say a large Ryder truck was seen parked behind Mr. Nichols's house in Herington on Monday night.

#### At the Counter At Cardie's Corner

Shortly before 9 P.M. on Monday, Larry Wild, 55, a former high school baseball coach and major league scout who grew up in Herington, had just finished pumping \$5 worth of gas at Cardie's Corner, a gas station and convenience store in downtown Herington. Mr. Wild said he saw a man whom he did not know waiting just inside the glass door and a man standing at the counter inside, his back to the door.

Just as Mr. Wild was going in to pay for his gas, the man at the counter turned around. That man, Mr. Wild said, was Mr. McVeigh. Mr. Wild said he did not see how the men left, by car or on foot. Mr. Nichols's house is only a few blocks away.

Mr. Wild told the police and the F.B.I. that the likeness of Mr. McVeigh from a sketch was very good, but that the face of the other man was less like the sketch he had seen of John Doe No. 2, although it fit his general description.

Mr. Wild described the mystery person as 5 feet, 10 inches, with dark hair combed back and a dark complexion. His cheekbones were more prominent than they appeared in the sketch, Mr. Wild said, and his face was a little less full. He appeared to be part Hispanic, and part Indian, Mr. Wild said, and was wearing a light-blue denim jacket.

At about 3:30 on Tuesday morning, back at the Dreamland in Junction City, Mr. King, who was drinking beer and watching movies with a friend, said he heard a noise, looked out at the parking lot and saw Mr. McVeigh sitting in the passenger seat of the Ryder truck. The dome light was on, Mr. King said, and the glove compartment open; Mr. McVeigh was examining a map.

When Mr. King left the motel just before dawn, he said he saw Mr. McVeigh still sitting in the Ryder truck, but when Mr. King returned at about 7 or 8 A.M., the truck was gone. Federal investigators have said in court that Mr. McVeigh, who had paid in advance, left the motel for good sometime before 5 A.M. on Tuesday.

#### Breakfast Talk At the Santa Fe Trail

Barbara Whittenberg and her husband, Robert, own the Santa Fe Trail diner in Herington on Trapp Street, the main road into town from Highway 77, which leads to Junction City. Mrs. Whittenberg said that early in the morning on Tuesday, the day before the bombing, Mr. McVeigh, Mr. Nichols and a third man ate in her restaurant. They had parked three vehicles in the parking lot, she said -- a white car with an Arizona license plate, a Ryder truck and a pickup truck.

Mrs. Whittenberg, who is from Yuma, Ariz., said she noticed the arrival of the men because when they parked, her son, Charlie, pointed out the Arizona license plate. She struck up a conversation with the three men.

Mr. Nichols was familiar to Mrs. Whittenberg, she said, because he occasionally came in for coffee or dinner. She also recalled that Mr. McVeigh had stopped in at one time. But she had never seen the third man, who she said had a dark complexion and might have been Hawaiian.

Mrs. Whittenberg said that when the F.B.I. sketches were published, she recognized the third man's resemblance to John Doe No. 2, although she said the man's face was slightly thinner, his cheekbones more prominent and his nose slightly wider than shown in the portrait.

Mrs. Whittenberg is the only person known to have actually spoken to the mystery man. A relative of hers was looking for a house in Herington at the time, she recalled, and, seeing the Ryder truck, she asked Mr. Nichols if he was moving out of a house that might be available. He avoided the question, she said.

Later in the conversation, she asked the men where they were headed, and the man she now identifies as John Doe No. 2 replied, "Oklahoma." When she responded that she had relatives in a town south of Oklahoma City, she said, the conversation stopped. "It was like ice water was thrown on it," she said.

The men stayed in the restaurant for about an hour, Mrs. Whittenberg said, and were gone before 9 A.M.

Later that day, after 2 P.M., "my husband and I drove to Junction City," Mrs. Whittenberg said. As they drove north past the entrance to Geary State Fishing Lake, she said she saw a Ryder truck parked by the lake and thought of the men in the diner. It looked to her like the same truck.

"They couldn't find a place to stay," she remembered saying.

Witnesses at the lake have told investigators that when they arrived at the lake at 9 A.M. on Tuesday, a Ryder truck and a blue or brown pickup truck were already there. This is where Federal investigators say the bomb was made from fertilizer and fuel oil.

Mr. Nichols has told Federal investigators that at 7:30 A.M. on Tuesday he met Mr. McVeigh in Junction City, where he loaned Mr. McVeigh his blue GMC pickup truck. Mr. Nichols went to an auction; Mr. McVeigh returned the pickup at 2 P.M., Mr. Nichols said. Mr. Nichols never mentioned returning to Herington before 9 A.M.

#### Asking Directions To the Bombing Site

In Oklahoma City, Mike Moroz, 25, is a service manager for Jerry's Tire, at Tenth and Hudson Streets downtown. Mr. Moroz said that on April 19, the day of the bombing, two men in a large Ryder truck stopped between 8:25 and 8:35 A.M. to ask for directions to Fifth and Harvey Streets, the site of the Federal Building.

The bomb exploded at 9:02 A.M.

The driver of the truck was Mr. McVeigh, Mr. Moroz said.

"There was someone with him," he said, "a man wearing a hat."

The other man "was dark-skinned," Mr. Moroz said. "That's all I know." Both men were wearing baseball caps, he said.

Like all the people who say they saw a mystery man, Mr. Moroz said that at the time, he did not give the matter much thought.

"We're located around a lot of one-way streets," he said. "People often get lost. It's an everyday deal."

Mr. Moroz and the others may not supply much detail. But as both sides prepare for trial, what he and other witnesses say they saw, even if imperfectly remembered, leaves the mystery unsolved.

## POINT BY POINT

### What Witnesses Say

Sightings of a man fitting the description of John Doe No. 2, who was the subject of a large manhunt after the April 19 bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

1. SIGHTING -- Saturday, April 15, Dreamland Motel, Junction City, Kan., by Shane Boyd.

DESCRIPTION -- Bushy-haired, smiling man, who resembled the F.B.I. sketches of John Doe No. 2, in the parking lot near room of Timothy J. McVeigh, who has been charged in the bombing.

2. SIGHTING -- Sunday, April 16, shortly after midnight, Dreamland Motel, by Connie Hood.

DESCRIPTION -- Man with thick, dark hair, brushed back, and an olive complexion, who stood about 5 feet, 9 or 10 inches tall, opened the door of a room near Mr. McVeigh's. Resembled sketches of John Doe No. 2, but had fuller features.

3. SIGHTING -- Monday, April 17, 3 P.M., Dreamland Motel, by Connie Hood.

DESCRIPTION -- Man who looked like the man Mrs. Hood saw on the 16th got out of Ryder truck in parking lot.

4. SIGHTING -- Monday, April 17, a few minutes later, Dreamland Motel, by Mrs. Hood's husband, Donald.

DESCRIPTION -- Man who resembled the F.B.I. sketches of John Doe No. 2 drove Ryder truck out of the parking lot. Man was about 5 feet, 9 inches, with dark brown hair brushed straight back and an olive complexion. Mr. McVeigh was in the passenger seat.

5. SIGHTING -- April 17, night, Cardie's Corner, a convenience store in Herington, Kan., by Larry Wild.

DESCRIPTION -- Mr. McVeigh and another man who fit the general description of John Doe No. 2. The other man was 5 feet, 10 inches tall, with dark hair combed back and a dark complexion. His cheekbones were more prominent than they appeared in the sketches, and his face was a little less full. He appeared to be part Hispanic and part Indian, and he was wearing a light-blue denim jacket.

6. SIGHTING -- April 18, early morning, Santa Fe Trail diner in Herington, by Barbara Whittenberg.

DESCRIPTION -- Terry L. Nichols, Mr. McVeigh and third man, who had a dark complexion, might have been Hawaiian and resembled John Doe No. 2, although the man's face was slightly thinner, his cheekbones more prominent and his nose slightly wider than shown in the sketches.

7. SIGHTING -- April 19, 8:25-8:30 A.M., Oklahoma City, by Mike Moroz.

DESCRIPTION -- Mr. McVeigh and a "dark-skinned" man. They stopped to ask him directions to the site of the Federal Building. Both were wearing baseball caps.

Maps of Oklahoma showing location of Oklahoma City; and of Kansas showing location of Dreamland Motel in Junction City, and Cardie's Corner and Santa Fe Trail diner in Herington. (pg. 28)