

Startling New Evidence: At Least 4 People Directly Involved in Bombing

Tuesday, January 23, 1996 - McCurtain Gazette
By J. D. Cash and Jeff Holladay
(Story continued from Sunday's Gazette)

At least four persons were directly involved in the April 19 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, the Gazette has learned after weeks of interviewing witnesses and accumulating statements from other investigators.

And, according to witnesses interviewed, the information has been in possession of the FBI for quite some time. Timothy McVeigh, though, remains the government's only defendant charged with "hands-on" involvement in the bombing that killed 169 men, women and children last April and injured hundreds of others. (Alleged co-conspirators Terry Nichols and Michael Fortier were not even in Oklahoma City on the day of the terrorist bombing.)

The findings of Gazette investigative reporter J.D. Cash defy all previous government assertions that there were no additional co-conspirators involved. Was it a government "sting operation" that went sour? And is it being covered up? Those are the questions being asked by some bombing victims and their families, as well as dismissed federal Hoppy Heidelberg, in the wake of growing skepticism about the credibility of the prosecution as new witnesses are discovered.

The Gazette's findings suggest at least four co-conspirators — in addition to McVeigh — worked with military precision to circumvent security at the Murrah building, detonate bombs and the escape using three different vehicles. Here is a countdown of events in the final 60 minutes before the tragic event of last April 19, using eyewitness accounts to detail some of the unexplained mysteries and evidence that there were other coconspirators involved:

The Mystery Pickup

It was just a minute or two after 8 a.m. on April 19, 1995, when Leonard Long and his daughter, Charise, nearly collided with a brown pickup truck — one that matches the description authorities put out an all-points bulletin (APB) for just minutes after the bombing. Leonard Long vividly recalls seeing two men inside the vehicle when it raced out of the parking lot of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building — nearly hitting his pickup.

One of the occupants, Long now believes, may possibly have been bombing defendant Timothy McVeigh. And the other, he said, matches the description of the dark-complexioned man later made famous as "John Doe No. 2."

Long's detailed recollections of the part- Indian or part-Hispanic individual mirror those of other witnesses in Oklahoma City and Kansas who later reported seeing the mysterious character in the company of Timothy McVeigh.

Long said he provided the description of the truck and its occupants to law enforcement authorities. He said they commented that the men may have driven through the parking lot of the Murrah building to check the security before bringing the bomb-laden yellow rental truck in.

Neither Long nor his daughter was called to testify before the federal grand jury investigating the bombing.

Another Sighting

It was 8:35 a.m. — some 27 minutes before the bomb blasts — when Tulsa businessman Kyle Hunt saw three Caucasian men in a pale sedan following a yellow Ryder rental truck near the intersection of Main and Robinson street in downtown Oklahoma City.

Noticing that the men in the sedan were craning their necks at the nearby buildings, Hunt considered offering directions to the apparently confused driver.

But after catching the driver's attention, Hunt received what he later characterized as a "go-to-hell look" from the young man behind the wheel of the sedan.

Hunt told authorities afterward that the driver of the sedan was Timothy McVeigh. Hunt was not summoned to testify at the grand jury.

The Bricktown Switch

Just a few blocks away from Hunt's sighting, and just a few minutes later, warehouse foreman David Snider recalls seeing a Ryder truck coasting at a very slow speed through the nearly abandoned Bricktown region of downtown Oklahoma City.

Thinking it was the delivery he was awaiting, Snider yelled and waved at the pair in the Ryder truck.

Snider said afterward he was only about eight feet from the two men when they passed. He identified the occupants as Timothy McVeigh and a man he said matched the description of "John Doe No. 2."

Snider was not called to testify before the grand jury.

(Hoppy Heidelberg, who raised pointed questions about omissions of federal prosecutors prior to his dismissal from the federal panel, speculated later that "John Doe No. 2" is a "government agent or informant.")

There is speculation that the conspirators pulled into the Bricktown area to make last-minute arrangements at this point, with McVeigh and John Doe No. 2 getting into the Ryder rental truck while other members of the bombing cabal took the remaining two vehicles to getaway positions near the Murrah building.

Next-to-last Stop

Mike Moroz clearly recalls meeting Timothy McVeigh in the minutes before the bombing — and even shaking his hand.

He is an employee of Johnny's Tire Center, just five blocks from the Murrah building. Sometime in the minutes before the fateful explosion, a yellow Ryder truck pulled into the parking lot of the tire repair shop and Moroz went to greet the two men inside the truck.

A tall, lean young man that Moroz would later identify as Timothy McVeigh stepped down from the rig. Moroz asked how he could help.

"The guy simply asked for directions to 5th and Harvey (the location of the Murrah building) and I told him it was straight down the street — to the south," Moroz said.

"McVeigh then thanked me, shook my hand and crawled back inside the vehicle, the other guy never looked at me. He had kind of a stern face and was dark complected. He also had on a ball cap."

Moroz said the men stayed there for a few minutes, then drove down Hudson in the direction of the Murrah building. He later helped the FBI identify McVeigh from a lineup after the defendant's arrest.

Moroz, however, was not called to testify before the federal grand jury investigating the bombing.

Recently, he said, the FBI interviewed him again, asking if he saw any radiotransmitting equipment inside the Ryder truck.

(Some investigators speculate that the real reason the suspects stopped at Johnny's Tire Store, which is on a steep rise overlooking downtown Oklahoma City, was to wait for a radio signal from the other conspirators, who were likely already in place. The FBI will not comment publicly about the recent interview of Moroz.)

Final Meeting

Almost in the shadow of the Murrah building, Joe (a fictitious name, since he refuses to allow his real identity to be revealed) was smoking a cigarette and listening to his car radio when something caught his attention:

It was two men standing behind a Ryder rental truck just across the street from the Sooner City Post Office parking lot at 5th and Harvey.

Thinking that the men were acting suspicious, as they passed something between them, Joe watched them closely.

He noticed two things:

—In front of the Ryder truck, parked at a meter on 5th Street, there was an empty yellow Mercury sedan.

—And sitting on the passenger side of the Ryder truck there was a stoic, stemfaced man in a ball cap who just stared straight ahead in the direction of the illfated building.

Finishing with his cigarette, Joe decided there was nothing going on, so he locked up his car and went inside to the post office.

Moments later, he came back outside and saw one of the men he'd been watching earlier — only this time the man was walking briskly away from the Ryder rental truck. He noticed, too, that the rental truck had been moved to near dead-center in front of the Murrah building.

6 Minutes to Blast

Gary Lewis, a pressman for the Journal- Record Co., was enjoying the spring weather and his pipe when he recalled it was Wednesday — the day he was supposed to turn in his dirty uniforms for clean ones.

Deciding to retrieve the uniforms from his pickup truck — parked less than a block away — Lewis walked toward an alley separating the Athenian Restaurant from the Journal-Record Building. On his way, Lewis notices a man sitting behind the wheel of a dirty yellow Mercury sedan, its engine idling only a few feet from where he passes. When he returns with his laundry, the first phase of the most terrifying day of Lewis' life will begin.

(Continued Wednesday: The countdown to the April 19, 1995 blasts which shattered the Murrah building in Oklahoma City and more eyewitness accounts.)