

The Final Moments Before The Oklahoma City Bombing

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The FBI and federal authorities have arrested only Timothy McVeigh as the hands-on participant in the April 19, 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Yet, eyewitness accounts suggest at least four conspirators were involved in the bombing, including "John Doe No. 2" who some now speculate is a government informant or witness. The latter include Hoppy Heidelberg, the federal grand juror dismissed because of his hinted criticism that the federal grand jury probe into the bombing was a sham. He and others now believe it was designed to cover up a government "sting operation" that went tragically wrong. Today's story continues the countdown to the last five minutes before the blasts that rocked the Murrah building.

5 Minutes to Blast

Lea Mohr had just about had it. She was disgusted.

She had circled the block for the second or third time and was now back in front of the Murrah building — where a yellow Ryder rental truck was still taking up her favorite parking spot, the handicapped zone.

Resigned to a longer walk, she decides to find a parking place nearby — and then to give the driver of the Ryder truck a piece of her mind when she walked back that way.

4 Minutes to Blast

Joe (the, eyewitness who refuses to allow the use of his real name) has now exited the post office and is waiting for the light to change at Harvey.

He sees the Ryder rental truck again — now parked right in front of the Murrah building. And walking away from it very briskly is the same tall, lean man he'd seen earlier when the vehicle was across from the post office.

Something else catches his eye — a customized Chevrolet pickup truck with tinted windows and big wheels and tires, almost identical to one Joe once owned.

The pickup, he notes, is parked only two or three spaces in front of the Ryder rental truck.

After the light changes, Joe turns north.

Minutes later he hears and feels the terrific blasts which rock Oklahoma City. Later, Joe contacts the FBI after he recognizes, on television, that same tall, lean figure he'd seen

on the day of the bombing. It was Timothy McVeigh being led from the courthouse in Perry two days after the bombing.

Joe was never summoned to testify at the grand jury investigating the bombing either about McVeigh — or the two other men he saw with the bombing defendants.

3 Minutes to Blast

Gary Lewis, the Journal-Record pressman, had his uniforms under one arm and was just stepping back into the parking lot separating the Murrah building from the Journal-Record building.

Suddenly, the roar of a racing engine caught his attention.

Frozen with surprise and fright, he could only stare for a second as he watched the yellow sedan, with two males inside, coming directly at him.

Galvanized into action, Lewis leaped away from the careening vehicle — just as the big yellow car hopped a car guard and sped west out of the parking lot.

Gary Lewis was never asked to testify at the grand jury looking into the bombing, where he would have told authorities that the man driving the yellow Mercury was, he was convinced Timothy McVeigh. And the passenger, he would testify, bore a resemblance to the wanted posters of "John Doe No. 2."

2 Minutes to Blast

"People watching" as a favorite activity for Dana Bradley.

And on the morning of April 19, 1995, as the clock ticked to 9 a.m., she was watching a dark-complected man in a ball cap and heavy ski jacket crawling out of a yellow Ryder truck. It was parked directly in front of the Murrah federal building. Standing with her sister, mother and her small child, Dana Bradley from inside the Murrah building as the man who had just exited the Ryder truck walked westward — then suddenly reversed direction and headed eastward at a rapid pace.

When the man walked out of her line of vision, she walked to the other side of the Murrah building — a move that may have saved her life.

Late that same night, Dana Bradley will be the last survivor pulled from the remains of the shattered federal building. Her leg had to be amputated, but her life was spared, as was that of her sister. The lives of her daughter and mother, though, were not.

Authorities later learned of Bradley's story. They interviewed her extensively. She was never asked to appear before the grand jury.

5 Seconds to Blast

Lea Mohr had finally walked around to the north side of the Murrah building when she spotted the yellow Ryder truck — still parked in her favorite spot.

Seconds later, she was to recall later, everything around her turned a "hellish" orange. She doesn't remember hearing the blasts.

Physicians describe her recovery as a miracle.

Lea Mohr, though, will not testify before the grand jury though she said the FBI interviewed her — and confiscated some film from her camera with which she had taken photos of the Ryder truck. Her camera and film escaped unscathed.

According to interviews with Mohr and motions filed by defense attorney Stephen Jones, she said she'd taken a series of photos of the Ryder truck as she circled the block minutes prior to the explosions — intending to complain to authorities because the truck was parked in a handicapped zone.

Also visible in the photos, she recalls, was a brown pickup truck whose description closely matched that of other eyewitnesses.

The FBI has never released these pictures to the public nor even confirmed their existence.

The Getaway

For Kay (whose name is fictitious because she refuses to allow its use, though willing to talk with the promise of anonymity), the moment appeared to mark the beginning of Armageddon.

A few blocks from where she was standing, a black-and-white cloud mushroomed upward...glass crashed from office windows all around the intersection of Main and Robinson...the blasts still reverberated in her ears.

Still stunned from the events that happened just as she stepped into the street, she was nonetheless jolted into action by the sight of a brown pickup truck, with two men inside, coming straight at her.

She had just managed to step back to the curb when the brown pickup truck raced past her, Kay recalled to reporter Jayna Davis of K-FOR TV in Oklahoma City. She is convinced that the brown pickup truck is the same one for which an APB was issued shortly after the bombing.

Neither Kay nor two other witnesses who saw two men jump into a brown truck just after the bombing were called before the grand jury investigating the bombing.

The Mystery Deepens

With all these eyewitnesses available, observers are mystified by the action of federal authorities in not soliciting their testimony — but in putting a witness on the stand from Junction City, Kansas.

According to published reports in the Dallas Morning News, a deliveryman for a Chinese restaurant was called before the grand jury and asked several carefully crafted but limited questions.

After the proceedings were completed, the witness told Arnold Hamilton, Oklahoma bureau chief for the Dallas Morning News, that he had indeed delivered some food to a room at the Dreamland Hotel, earlier established as rented by McVeigh — but said he'd never seen McVeigh there.

In fact, the deliveryman said, "It was a guy who had long hair and in no way resembled Timothy McVeigh."

"I was shocked that prosecutors would not let me get that into the record," he added. "They only asked me if someone accepted the food and paid for it. Tm sure those people (the grand jurors) thought I was talking about McVeigh...but I never saw him."