

## **McVeigh may have called camp to find place to stay - His acts before blast probed**

January 27, 1996 | Dallas Morning News, The (TX)

Author: Lee Hancock, Pete Slover | Page: 29A | Section: NEWS

A 36-year-old Civil War buff from Germany may offer the answer to a persistent mystery in the Oklahoma City bombing case: Why did suspect Timothy McVeigh call Elohim City, a backwoods Oklahoma religious camp, two weeks before the April 19 blast?

Investigators began questioning Elohim City residents in May about a call from a house where Mr. McVeigh lived in Kingman, Ariz. It was made about four minutes after he allegedly made a call to reserve the truck used in the bombing.

At the time, Elohim City leaders expressed puzzlement, and nobody offered an explanation about who Mr. McVeigh might have been calling.

Friday, the lawyer for Andreas Strassmeir, who lived at Elohim City until last summer, said the former German army officer may have met Mr. McVeigh and given him the compound's phone number at a Tulsa gun show a year-and-a-half before the blast.

Mr. McVeigh and a former Army buddy, Terry Nichols, face the death penalty if convicted of murder and other charges stemming from the bombing, which killed 169.

The Rev. Robert Millar, leader of Elohim City, said Friday that a resident remembers getting a call around the time of the blast from someone saying he knew Mr. Strassmeir. The caller asked whether he could stay there but never showed up, Rev. Millar said.

The caller didn't use the name McVeigh or any of his known aliases and didn't ask to speak to Mr. Strassmeir, Rev. Millar said.

Rev. Millar said that it was unlikely that Mr. Strassmeir was ever told of the two-minute call and that Elohim City residents made the connection only recently.

"We have no proof that he called," he said. "But it's plausible."

Mr. Lyons said Mr. Strassmeir was probably at Elohim City when the call came.

"He knew nothing about it," he said. "He agrees, though, that it was probably McVeigh."

Mr. Lyons is a former Texan known for his representation of white supremacists and his association with such groups as Idaho-based Aryan Nations. He said he is representing Mr. Strassmeir in a bid to obtain permanent residency in the United States.

He said his client, a German citizen who recently returned there, has never been questioned by federal authorities about the phone call to Elohim City or his encounter with Mr. McVeigh.

Mr. Lyons said Mr. Strassmeir first came to the United States in 1988 to participate in a Civil War reenactment at Gettysburg. Mr. Lyons said he arranged for Mr. Strassmeir to move to Elohim City several years ago.

When the story of the phone call broke in May, Mr. Strassmeir was one of a number of armed security people who escorted reporters around the remote community.

Mr. Lyons represented former Texas Ku Klux Klan leader Louis Beam in the 1988 federal sedition trial in Fort Smith, Ark. The trial, in which Mr. Beam and other white supremacists were acquitted, included testimony from Jim Ellison about earlier plans to blow up the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City.

Mr. Ellison, married to Mr. Millar's daughter, now lives in Elohim City.

In other developments, an Oklahoma City newspaper reported that the Oklahoma Bar Association has received a formal complaint that Mr. McVeigh's lead attorney, Stephen Jones, misled prison officials about two Newsweek reporters who interviewed the bombing suspect last summer.

The Daily Oklahoman said the complaint was referred to the bar after prosecutors declined to pursue the matter. The complaint was first lodged with the Justice Department by the warden at the Federal Correctional Institution in El Reno, Okla., where Mr. McVeigh has been held.

The warden, Ron Thompson, confirmed Friday that the Newsweek representatives were misidentified as defense investigators. Mr. Jones denied he misrepresented anything, the newspaper reported.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Steve Mullins, said he could not comment because of court order. Mr. Jones was unavailable for comment. The warden said he now has an excellent working relationship with the McVeigh defense team.

Staff writer Arnold Hamilton in Oklahoma City contributed to this report