

More Arrests Pending in Oklahoma City Bombing Case?

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By J.D. Cash with Jeff Holladay

CHEYENNE, Wyo. - "Sex, drugs and rock 'n roll" sums up one young girl's experiences with Timothy McVeigh and his friends from Fort Riley, Kansas. Living in seclusion now just a few miles from here, Catina Lawson desperately wants to shed the label of "Tim McVeigh's ex-girlfriend."

But it won't go away. Media attention has suddenly focused on the 23-year-old former Herington, Kan., resident, whose lurid recollections may provide investigators critical evidence in the Oklahoma City bombing conspiracy. And she may soon be the focus of even more attention with the possible arrest of another suspect in the Oklahoma City bombing.

A high-level source at the FBI has confirmed that at least one more persona associated with the Oklahoma City bombing investigation may be arrested in the near future.

Possibly related to that information, the Daily Oklahoman reported in Saturday's edition that the federal grand jury's term has been extended for an additional six months to further investigate the Oklahoma City bombing.

Grand jury members have convened at least twice during the past 60 days after months of inactivity, it was reported. An Eyewitness to Crucial Links Catina Lawson's testimony is important because of linkage it shows between McVeigh and others.

Lawson was mentioned — but not named — in a Time Magazine story just a week after McVeigh's arrest on bombing conspiracy charges. It reported that a female friend of McVeigh's from the Fort Riley area had been questioned extensively by the FBI.

For more than a year, Catina Lawson escaped press interviews by keeping a low profile as she moved about the Northwestern U.S.

Now, in the wake of stories in the Gazette last week that may have established critical links between McVeigh and other suspected conspirators, there is fresh interest in Catina Lawson's story. On Wednesday, June 5, this newspaper reported that the mother of a Herington, Kan., girl identified a photo of Andreas Carl Strassmeir and said she met the German military officer during the fall of 1992. She said her daughter's friends brought the young man to her home. The woman also said she knew her daughter was a friend of bombing defendant Timothy McVeigh and admitted co-conspirator Michael Fortier.

Moreover, she told the Gazette that her daughter introduced her to Strassmeir's former Elohim City, Michael Brescia, about the same time.

If accurate, the critical importance of the information is that it establishes an association between Strassmeir, Brescia, Fortier and McVeigh — one that Strassmeir and his attorney have repeatedly and vigorously denied.

National media investigators first turned their attention to possible connections between the Oklahoma City bombing and certain ex-Elohim City residents after the Gazette reported this exclusive information last January:

That Tim McVeigh had called Strassmeir at Elohim City on April 5, 1995, only seconds after McVeigh called a Ryder truck rental establishment, according to telephone records.

Elohim City, a redoubt of the Christian Aryan supremacist movement in eastern Oklahoma, is where Richard Wayne Snell's body was buried following his execution in Arkansas on April 19, 1995 — just 12 hours after a truck bomb ripped apart the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, killing 168 persons and injuring hundreds more.

Is there a connection between the compound and the Oklahoma City bombing?

McVeigh's defense attorney Stephen Jones of Enid, thinks so.

He believes the well-publicized execution of Snell, who has been elevated to hero status among many white supremacist groups may have been the actual motive for the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building.

Partying with McVeigh

"I was never Tim's girl," Catina Lawson asserts, though she apparently knew him well.

"My ex-roommate and I partied with Tim McVeigh and his friends when I was a senior in high school. There is a rumor that we were lovers, but it's not true. "My ex-roommate was pretty wild. You might try to find her and maybe she will tell you what her involvement was. I know she would fill up the bathtub with jello and have some of the soldiers from Fort Riley over..."

"I don't remember some of the stuff that happened real well anymore..."

Catina Lawson said she was actually closer to Michael Fortier, Tim McVeigh's ex-Army buddy, who has already confessed to his role in the bombing.

"Mike and I were close... I liked him a lot. He rode a Harley. My roommate and I would go up to Junction City and rent a motel room at the Dreamland, and Mike (Fortier) and Brescia and some of the other guys from Fort Riley would come by and party with us."

Describing drug use at the time, she said, "Mike (Fortier) was always messed up on something...I know for a fact he 'dropped acid' (LSD) and I think he 'shot up' too."

McVeigh, on the other hand, she said, "didn't go in for that stuff. ..he liked to drink beer. He was quiet, you know...shy around the girls unless there was a subject he was interested in that came up. Then he would get into the conversation — sometimes pretty hot and heavy." Detailing her experiences with the serious side of McVeigh, she remembered the decorated Desert Storm veteran as sometimes being erratic around other people.

"Politics and the screwed-up government were Tim's passion. Tim was really down on the government after he came back from the Gulf War."

Investigative reporter J.D. Cash authenticated the likelihood that Catina Lawson knew McVeigh because she spoke of several personal facets of the bombing defendant's demeanor and conduct that coincided with observations Cash made during an exclusive interview last February with him.

He cited these examples of her remarks, which he said only someone who knew McVeigh would note:

"You know, when Tim gets into political discussions, his whole personality changes, he goes from .being a happy go lucky guy to sort of a college professor... "He takes charge, leans back in his chair...crosses his legs and begins speaking with authority...He becomes a totally different person."

Also, she said, "Tim was really hung up on his sister Jennifer...You know, she is really wild. He told us she would go to bars and jello-wrestle other girls.

Her Reaction to OKC Bombing

Catina Lawson was asked her reaction to the Oklahoma City bombing. Could she believe it was carried out by her friends and acquaintances?

"I am sick — sick — about all this," she said. "I can't believe my friends could be capable of anything like that." Yet she wanted to do the right thing, she said, so "I called the FBI when they arrested Tim. And they have been interviewing me about all this stuff." Recently, though, "some strange things have been happening," she said.

"When I got home a few weeks ago, almost all of my pictures of these people that I ran around with in Kansas...and some letters were missing. All my personal things had been gone through..."

"Then, two days later, a couple of FBI agents found me again and started asking questions about what was in my letters and things like that. I'm° sure they were the ones who went through my things because they knew stuff I hadn't told them." She explained: "They are trying to find my ex-roommate...Brescia's old girlfriend...and a couple of other girls that we partied with."

Cash, at this juncture, showed Catina Lawson a photo of Andreas Strassmeir. And she, like her mother, readily identified it.

"Sure, that's Andy," she said.

"I really don't remember much about him other than he was a jerk. He was really cocky around everyone. He told us his dad was a big deal in Germany...some kind of political leader... "He has a foreign accent and is kinda buck-toothed."

Asked to be more specific about her relationship with the son of Germany's former secretary of state, she responded: "I can't think of where we may have gone together...I think he was with McVeigh's buddies at the U.S. Grant Club in Junction City one night. We may have danced, then gone outside and messed around in his car...I'm not sure — I probably met 200 soldiers that summer.

"All I remember is that he ran with Tim (McVeigh) and Mike (Fortier) and that whole crowd — and that he was an arrogant jerk...and he had bad breath."

John Doe No. 2' ID'd?

Lawson was handed the FBI sketch of the infamous "John Doe No. 2" that federal investigators had sought shortly after the Oklahoma City bombing.

"Yes, this sketch is pretty close to what Mike looks like," she said, alluding to Mike Brescia.

"My mom told the FBI all this some time ago."

She noted some differences "in the eyes and the cheekbones" between the sketch and her recollection of Brescia, then added: "But I guess when you consider that Mike had unusually large muscles in his upper body and arms,..and his height and weight, hair color...maybe it's him. "Brescia looks Hawaiian too — that's what they say John Doe 2 looked like, but I don't know..."

Nervously, she added, "I don't like answering questions about Mike — he's still out there someplace. Tim and Mike Fortier are in jail, but Brescia is still out there."