

ELOHIM CITY LINKED

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A former Elohim City resident was implicated as the alleged fifth member of an extremist white racist group dubbed "The Midwest Bank Bandits" during a trial this week in Des Moines, Iowa.

Elohim City, a white separatist compound in eastern Oklahoma, has previously been linked to various criminal activities and to the Oklahoma City bombing by the McCurtain Gazette.

The existence of the mysterious fifth man-- who has not been arrested or charged-- emerged during testimony provided by one of the gang members, also a former Elohim City resident.

Kevin McCarthy, 19, agreed to testify against his ex-comrades in exchange for a plea bargain. He provided riveting courtroom testimony this week about how the bandits traveled around the United States robbing banks.

Prosecutors had warned McCarthy not to mention the name of the "fifth man" and to avoid mentioning the name of the "farm compound" where the suspect was dropped off, the Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch reported Thursday.

The government believes the robbers held up a total of 22 banks in seven states from January 1994 to December 1995.

FBI officials say the modern-day "James Gang" took in more than \$200,000 -- none of which has been recovered but which they allege was distributed to various white separatist groups.

Until Tuesday, government prosecutors had only publicly mentioned four men as members of the gang-- McCarthy, Peter Langan, 38; Scott A. Stedeford, 27; and the late Richard Lee Guthrie Jr., 38.

The trial in Des Moines, Iowa, is the first in connection with the skein of bank robberies. Focus of the trial is former Elohim City resident Scott Stedeford, charged for his alleged role in the March 29, 1995 robbery of the Boatman's Bank in Des Moines.

One of the high points of McCarthy's testimony was his disclosure that Stedeford transported a fifth member of the group-- the first public revelation of another member of the gang-- to what he referred to as "a farm compound in Oklahoma".

And that fifth member, McCarthy testified, had just participated in the August 30, 1995 robbery of a bank in Madison, Wisconsin.

While the prosecutors warned McCarthy not to mention the name of the "fifth man", nor to identify the "farm compound," the Columbus Dispatch said it learned independently that the mystery man was "a neo-Nazi activist presently living in the Philadelphia (Penn.) area and was a former resident of the eastern Oklahoma white separatist colony, Elohim City."

SOURCES NAME MYSTERY MAN

According to McCurtain Gazette law enforcement sources familiar with the investigation, the mystery man under intense investigation is Michael Brescia.

Brescia left Elohim City shortly after the Madison, Wisconsin, bank robbery and eventually made his way to his parents' home in Philadelphia, where he currently lives.

Brescia has also been named as a co-defendant in a wrongful death civil lawsuit filed by Oklahoma City bombing victim Edye Smith, who lost two small children in the April 19, 1995 blast that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah federal building.

Brescia was recently named a co-defendant with German national Andreas Strassmeir and Michael Fortier in the lawsuit originally filed last January against Timothy McVeigh.

BRESCIA LINKS OUTLINED

As previously reported in the Gazette, Brescia lived at Elohim City for at least two years-- sharing a house with German national Andreas Strassmeir.

It was Strassmeir, Elohim City residents said, whom bombing defendant Timothy McVeigh placed telephone calls to at Elohim City on April 5 and April 17.

Much attention has been focused on the April 5, 1995 telephone call, since it occurred only seconds after McVeigh allegedly called a Ryder rental truck outlet in Arizona.

It was a Ryder truck rented in Kansas that authorities say McVeigh used in the Oklahoma City bombing.

Strassmeir claims he did not take McVeigh's calls and says he doesn't know why McVeigh called him since he'd only met him once before at a gun show in 1993 in Tulsa.

Other interesting connections to the Oklahoma City bombing emerged when witnesses in Kansas told the FBI and the McCurtain Gazette that they believe Michael Brescia is the elusive subject of the FBI's once-heralded worldwide manhunt for "John Doe #2."

Inexplicably, authorities have dismissed eyewitness reports concerning Brescia, Strassmeir and "John Doe #2." Only McVeigh and his former Army buddy, Terry Nichols, have been charged in connection with the Oklahoma City bombing.

Strassmeir left Elohim City about the same time as Brescia, returning eventually to his native Berlin.

Unnamed FBI sources, however, had earlier confirmed to the Gazette that Strassmeir was an ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Bureau) intelligence operative sent to Elohim City to gather information on the neo-Nazi movement.

The ATF, though, has skirted answering questions about the undercover role, and Strassmeir has vehemently denied the allegation.

This week in Denver, however, attorneys for McVeigh are arguing for release of the government's classified records on Strassmeir and his role as a possible undercover operative in this country.

As for Brescia, the Columbus Dispatch reported that the FBI told them that, despite McCarthy's information, they still do not have the necessary evidence to indict him for the Madison, Wisconsin, bank heist.